The Son of Perdition

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The Son of Perdition

by LivingOnTheEdge5

Summary

Part four of the "To Sow The Wind" series.

Reading the whole series is recommended.

The series is set after season 2 (begun during the HeAtEus so none of S3 plotlines have been used until this final part)

Series Plot:
Hannibal, a fugitive living in Italy, decides he needs to help his friend Will- by kidnapping him natch.

Part I
Hannibal tracks down a son Will didn't know existed, and uses the boy as a pawn in his plans to kidnap and woo Will. Since Hannibal isn't all that fond of children, he leaves the boy and takes the canolli (I mean Will.)

Part II-III
Hannibal and Will become lovers and leave America (Will may or may not be heavily drugged at the time.) Bedelia brings Will's kid to them with the intent to kill Hannibal and bring Will back home. Shit goes sideways, as it always does when Hannibal is involved.

Part IV- Hannibal finds himself head of a little family. Is family life all it's cracked -up to be?

(Author's note: Neither Will, Hannibal, nor the boy will be killed in this story.)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Here to stay

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.
— John 17:12

Cat Island, The Bahamas

"What are you going to do?"

"Do?"

"With me."

Hannibal smile widens; William hates how the man's sharp canines become exposed whenever he's feeling particularly pleased with himself.

"Well... I'd have to say...that depends entirely upon you young man." Hannibal watches as the shaggy head lowers defiantly. *Haircut before the day is out*. "Did you hear what I said William?"

The child nods but doesn't meet his gaze.

"In this house," Hannibal's voice is clipped and metallic," you will look at me when I am speaking to you," then his tone warms, "I'm certain your father would approve."

William's thin shoulders tighten at the mention of Will Graham and his head jerks upright.

"Thank you," Hannibal says softly. "I'm very happy you're here with us." He waits to see if William has anything to add, but the boy stays stubbornly silent. "I think we're all going to get along very nicely. Now, get dressed and come downstairs, you must be hungry."

It isn't until Hannibal pulls the door shut that William ducks under the sheet and allows himself to cry.

Will is waiting at the foot of the main staircase. "How is he?"

"Emotional...naturally... but happy to be here with you."

Liar. Will steps in front of Hannibal, blocking his path. "He needs to be sent back."

"Alright," Hannibal says soothingly, and steps around his lover," but let's feed him first, shall we?"

Will shadows Hannibal to the kitchen. "I'm serious Hannibal. I don't want William here."

The other man slides an ancient cast iron skillet to the front burner and looks at Will with bemusement. "What's troubling you?"

"Please...just let me get him on a plane out of here...then we can go where we want to go and do what we want to do."

Hannibal cracks an egg into the pan; it's dull shine a testament to how it's been kept here, seasoned and at the ready. "And you don't think we could do that with our child?"

Our child. A shiver runs down Will's back."It's too risky."

"We can manage."

"No."

"Dad?"

Still in his pajamas, William is in the doorway; his eyes, nose, and cheeks a bright pink.

"Hey buddy," Will says, hurrying over, "are you hungry?"

William ignores Will, looking across the room to where Hannibal is breaking eggs, one-handed, into a pan. The boy waits until the man turns his attention from his cooking to him before speaking. "I don't want to be sent away Dr. Lecter."

"William!" Will begins.

"Alright," Hannibal agrees, flawlessly breaking another egg," wash and dress and we'll discuss it over breakfast."

The boy doesn't hesitate; without another word he scampers out the kitchen and upstairs. Seething, Will turns back to the man at the range. "We're not doing this."

"How many eggs would you like?"

Hannibal, smug in his knowledge that all but the most primitive of weapons are secured, opens the coffee bean canister. "I've promised him we would talk about it over..." suddenly, his features twist, and he staggers backwards. Will catches the container before it smashes onto the tiles.

"Careful! Here," he propels Hannibal to a seat. "Sit."

Hannibal smiles up into Will's face; that puckish, boyish smile that tugs at his heart and stirs his guilt. *He loves you.*

"Thank you," Hannibal sighs, leaning to rest his hot head against Will," I admit... I'm feeling poorly. "

Visions of septis, infection, and gangrene race through Will's head. *This could be William's way-out*. Will has no idea why Hannibal lied to him about William's death, but he can't waste precious time puzzling it out now. He smoothes his palm over Hannibal's sweaty forehead. "You're definitely running a fever. Did they give you antibiotics?"

"Already taken," Hannibal murmurs, his eyes closed, a look of innocent enjoyment on his face at Will's ministrations. Then the brown eyes open and met his. "We should be expecting the policeman any moment, wouldn't you say?" Hannibal rolls his eyes to the French doors where a uniformed man is standing, one hand poised to knock.

"Good morning gentlemen!" A muffled voice calls, "can you let me in please?"

From his upstairs room, William watches as a policeman parks his car at the end of the long drive and walks around the house into the garden. He pulls on a pair of shorts and a weird, button-up plaid shirt, ignoring the new pair of leather sandals set-out on an armchair. *No way am I going to wear those nerd shoes! Barefoot is quieter anyway.*

William tiptoes down the hallway, taking mental notes of which boards creak as he goes. Open-mouthed, he stands at the landing. Low voices are murmuring from the vicinity of the kitchen. *Maybe I can find Bedelia while they're busy! I wonder if Hannibal is going to kill that man?* A worse thought, brings the boy's heart to his throat. *Maybe he'll have dad do it.*

William presses himself against the carved banister and slowly descends. *Where would she be? Unless he already killed her and*...a vision of Freddie's bloody hand clutching his bare ankle brings a squeak to his lips.

"Is that you William?"

Apparently, Hannibal the Cannibal's hearing game is strong. *Don't mess this up!*

"Coming!" He calls sweetly taking-in as much of the floor plan he can in his limited amount of time.

A strange domestic scene greets him when he comes into the kitchen.

The policeman is seated at the counter, sampling a sugary Palmier, cup of coffee steaming beside him. He greets the boy with a confused air. "William?" He looks from the child to Hannibal and back again." I understood it was a little girl who had come?"

Hannibal smiles, his manner a study of paternal understanding.

"No, just the one boy; my nephew. But William is very special ...he often enjoys wearing girl's clothes... in many ways...he considers himself a female."

William's cheeks flame red.

"Oh!" Is all the man manages before he peruses the child as one would a freak; with cautious curiosity.

Hannibal beams; a proud, tolerant uncle. " William, is your mother awake yet?" Hannibal's face is out of the stranger's view, but there's no mistaking the menace in those sherry-brown eyes.

William jerks his head back and forth. *Play stupid*. "No, she's still tired from the plane ride. Can I have a cookie too?"

Hannibal winks appreciatively and turns to Will. "I think one small cookie won't hurt his appetite."

Will sense of surrealism grows as he watches his son, still pink from humiliation, served a cookie by the man who has eviscerated both their lives.

Hannibal offers the platter to the policeman who declines it. "Will you be needing to ask William any questions?"

"No, no, that won't be necessary." The policeman sets down his half eaten pastry; all at once, he seems to be a hurry to leave."I'll come back if I have any further questions."

"Of course," Hannibal offers the man a napkin and appears to ponder his next inquiry before speaking. "And have you heard anything more about our man Claus? We still owe him a month's pay."

William looks up from his cookie plate to see his father staring at him with a warning look, *don't say anything*.

His Palmier sticks in his throat.

"I haven't," the policeman says, placing his cap back on," but I will let you know as soon as I hear. Now...would you like to pay your fine here, or at the courthouse?"

"Here, just let me get my wallet."

"Your uncle is a very good cook," the man tilts his head down to William, attempting to be kind, "you should get him to teach you...it would come in handy if you decide to live... as a woman."

Ashamed, William drops his eyes and nods.

"Here you are," Hannibal is back with a stack of bills." Four hundred?"

"Yes, sir," the man confirms, double checking the amount before placing it into a zippered pouch. "And here is your receipt."

"Thank you. Once again we apologize for the trouble we've put the authorities through."

"Accidents happen. But the weapon is secure and the fine has been paid. Everything is in order."

"Yes, thank you."

"Alright then, be safe and enjoy your remaining stay."

"Why'd you tell him that! You didn't have to tell him that!"

William had waited until the sound of the policeman's car has died away before unleashing his righteous fury.

Ignoring the child, Hannibal raises his elbow and allows Will to pull him to his feet. "Thank you. I think I will go rest. William? Could you hand me that cane please?"

Near tears once more, William grabs the ornate walking stick and shoves it into Hannibal's hand.

"Thank you. Will? Could you assist me back to our room?" To the boy the last two words seem unnecessarily emphasized. "William, wait here. Your father will be back down momentarily to cook your breakfast."

William watches as the two men make their slow departure, taking many breaks and talking quietly as they ascend the stairs. He waits until they are completely out of sight before edging along the walls of the kitchen and ducking into the entry hall. William reaches the dark hallway off the main dining room and pauses, ears craned. Upstairs, the creaking of floorboards clues him to the adult's whereabouts; surefooted he runs to the first door and pulls it open: dainty tables laden with silver picture frames, velvet love seats, and a gold harp. *No places to hide a body*. William closes the door and goes to the next.

This room is more masculine and much darker, with floor to ceiling bookshelves lining the walls. William's bare feet slip, whisper quiet across the Oriental carpets. It's the kind of room the boy imagines Dickens would have written in, and as he scans the space, his eye is caught by an enormous desk darkly gleaming at the far end. He is just turning to look at a massive marble mantelpiece when a sound, slight, but close at hand, causes the hair on the back of his neck to prickle. William glances over his shoulder; the doorway and hall beyond it are quiet and empty. Then what can only be described as a moan, soft, but wretchedly pitiful, sends the boy bolting, back to the safety of the doorway. He leans against the casing, one foot in the hallway , and peers across the gloomy chamber.

Whatever that was...it's in that corner.

Will settles Hannibal into bed, and brings him medication and a carafe of water.

"Thank you beloved, that's all I require." Hannibal takes hold of one of Will's hands and brings it to his lips. "Thank you for taking care of me. A few days rest, should suffice."

Will nods and attempts to go, when the hand holding his tightens. "I know you worry about William...don't. We have saved him. You know as well as I what his life in the system would have been like."

Will shakes his head. " Lottie."

"Was a wonderful woman and mother, no doubt," Hannibal releases Will's hand and settles himself more comfortably under the covers. "But William has you now, and to a lesser degree, myself. Two people to love, guide, and serve as his champions for the rest of our lives. Something I desperately needed but didn't have when my own mother died."

"I..." Will is struggling, Hannibal pushes down on his own impatience," I don't know what to do."

"Then don't...let me lead in this, just until you are better able to manage."

"This is wrong."

My poor, dear, penitent Will. "No...this is **wonderful**... You have your son, we have each other...Go! Go take care of him. He needs you now, more than ever."

To Hannibal's satisfaction, Will's face relaxes. "Alright...do you want any breakfast?"

"Later, beloved. Right now, sleep is all I require."

Hannibal looks so young and angelic snuggled-up, his eyes bright with fever, that Will's heart swells with fondness. *He needs you. They both do*. "Sleep well, I'll take care of it," he promises and leaves.

Hannibal sighs with contentment and sits-up. His wound had been a glancing one; bloody, but not deep and requiring no more than ten stitches.

The subsequent low-grade fever had been a gratifying boon.

Hannibal makes-up the bed to simulate an occupant and opens the room's hidden door. The rapacious sugar baron's home is riddled with these passageways, stairs, and hidden chambers.

Hannibal steps inside and clicks the panel shut.

Tėvelis or Tėtis

Chapter Summary

Hannibal enjoys a meal with his expanded family. Bedelia is not planning on becoming the next batch of breakfast sausage.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is dedicated to Azvee who is always so sweet and supportive of my stories- thank you BB!

and to JoJa- who wanted to see the paternal side of Hannibal-I'm trying :0)

If you have ideas= throw them my way= if I can incorporate them, I will.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"William!"

The boy jumps when Will hisses his name; he's been standing here, beside the desk gathering his courage to look under it."Dad?"

"Get back here...now!"

From behind the bookshelf, Hannibal swipes a trickle of sweat off his temple; it's sweltering inside the walls. He peers through the mesh covered peephole, ingenuously set into a framed mourning wreath.

Apparently, Will has discovered William snooping.

"Where's Hannibal?" The boy whispers loudly.

No honorific, Hannibal notes, *interesting.*

Will hears what must have drawn his son into the room; throaty moans and dull thumps. "Upstairs in bed. Now get away from there!"

William runs to his father and grabs his hand. "I think it's Bedelia! We need to get her dad! Please!"

He pulls, but the man wrenches his hand from the boy's grasp then captures William's elbows so tightly, they instantly go numb.

Entranced, Hannibal presses closer.

"No! Now come out of here!"

William digs his toes into the rug and snaps his teeth inches from Will's hand. Startled, Will lets go.

William regains his footing and careens away towards the desk. He manages to get within a foot of his goal before he's yanked backwards by his collar and into Will's arms.

"NO!" The boy screams, kicking and wind milling his legs. Will lifts him diagonally against his chest and carries him through the house and out into the garden.

Batting his way through thick cobwebs, Hannibal runs up the hidden staircase to the second floor. He exits the passage way and steps outside to a balcony.

Though vegetation obscures his view, Hannibal easily tracks his quarry by William's screams. *Sounds like a pig being slaughtered*, he decides, catching sight of the duo when they emerge by the stone wall.

Will is carrying his son onto the beach. *Either he is going to drown the boy, or dunk him into the ocean to stem this temper tantrum...time to move Bedelia.*

Sweating profusely, Will walks until they reach the waterline. He dumps William onto the damp sand.

"Ooof!" The boy glares up at him. "What's wrong with you!?" He starts to crawl around his father's legs but his ankles are caught and he's dragged back.

"Calm down!"

Sputtering out a mouthful of sand, William manages to get a few kicks in. "No! You calm down! You're the one who's crazy!"

"Keep your voice down! We don't need Hannibal to hear what we're saying."

Will's words have their desired effect. Sandy lips forgotten, William freezes, staring, expectantly, up at his father. But when Will sits beside him William flinches and crabwalks several feet away. *Ouch...but I guess I deserved that.*

"Why should I trust you?!" The boy sasses, flopping onto the sand." We could've gotten her and been gone already!" William looks comical, using his shirt tails to wipe his tongue.

"I know, I'm sorry." Will, offers the boy a beautifully ironed linen handkerchief.

William takes the handkerchief with a skeptical look. "W.G."He reads slowly. *Ewww!* "Here!" William tosses it back. "I don't want to get your *boyfriend's* present all *dirty."*

Will teeters between anger, embarrassment, and amusement. "Have it your way." He carefully refolds the handkerchief and returns it to his pocket.

William watches Will's actions with distain. "You're just like him now... Does that mean you're going to kill Bedelia?"

Will stares across at the glittering sea. "Would that be such a bad thing William?" He looks back at the child. "Bedelia is not a good person."

William gasps. *I was right!* "She's my friend!"

"No...she's your kidnapper."

William scowls. "Remember when you told me Hannibal wasn't my friend?! Why do you think he's yours?! Why did you run away with him?" William is fighting tears. "He kills everyone he meets! He's gonna kill Bedelia and then me!"

Will wraps an arm around the boy's shoulders. "He isn't going to hurt you William." The promise rings hollow, even to Will.

"Uggg! Let...me... go!" William tries to smack Will's face, but his wrists are encircled and held together before they make contact.

"Calm down!"

"NO!" William's kicking feet shower them both with sand.

"Stop!" Will yells, using his own legs to press the boy's back down.

"Ahhhhhh! You're smushing me! Let...me...GO!"

"I will if you stop kicking me!"

"FINE!"

The boy instantly goes limp and Will releases him.

William scoots back to his original spot."Why'd you go with him!?" He got someone to kill my mom! He killed John! "

Will runs a hand over his hair, the sand he dislodges is fine as sugar. He doesn't bother setting the boy straight or defending himself. *In a way he's right. I'm here willingly now.*

"I'm sorry. I sympathize with you, William, but I can't alter what's happened. "

A series of emotions pass through William's face; disappointment, disgust, and finally rage. "Sympathize?! Sympathy is next to shit in the dictionary, and I can't even read!"

It's a wisecrack Will recalls his father saying all throughout his own childhood. *I didn't teach him that...did I?* "Don't be rude! I am sorry you've gotten swept-up in all this."

William's lip curls, but his voice is measured. "You're such a prick... Mr. Crawford told me you were Hannibal's bitch now. We had a big fight about it!"

Will's face heats, though he knows Jack would never say such a thing. *Where is he learning this language? Maybe Hannibal is right, William needs to be taken-out of the system.* "Don't be so disrespectful." He stares stonily into the boy's eyes. "Don't forget William... you were the one who came to me...I didn't want you here."

William face crumples.

Trust me, buddy...its better this way. "But since you are here, we need to figure-out how this is going to work...just until I can get you back home."

William is no longer listening, he's drawn his knees to his chest and hidden his face; curled-up he's shrunken to the size of a five year old.

Oh...William.

Will doesn't want to believe Hannibal has brought William here for some nefarious reason. *What was he thinking?! Did he truly imagine this working!?*

It takes several minutes before William speaks again, though he doesn't raise his head or look at Will when he does. "I killed Freddie."

Will's stomach drops away. "Freddie? Freddie Lounds?! "

Still cradling his head on his knees, William tilts it sideways; his eyes are darkly glittering; Will's stomach lurches again.

"Yeah...I killed her...in the little house by the lake."

Will swallows, his mind effortlessly recreating the scene. "Are you sure? What happened? "

William doesn't appear to have heard. "I miss my moooom," he howls, throwing back his head. "I... really... really...miss herrrr."

This time, when Will pulls William into an embrace, the temptation to be comforted is too strong. Will's son burrows into his father's arms, all the while hating himself for his weakness. *Why are you hugging him?! He doesn't even like you. He only likes Hannibal now.*

"It's alright," Will is instinctively rocking the child in his arms, "shhhh...it's going to be okay."

Vindictively, William wipes his wet cheeks and runny nose on Will's shirt. "Stop lying...nothing is going to be okay."

Oh God...he's right. "William... why do you think that you killed Freddie? Can you tell me what happened?"

William stonily turns his face away.

"William, sweetheart," Will gently pushes the boy to arms length." Can you look at me for a minute?"

William scowls; he knows his face is red and tear stained...and *Sweetheart?! Eww!*

"What?!" He demands irritably, scrubbing his damp face with a sandy palm and pulling away to plop back onto the sand in a miserable heap.

"Tell me what happened."

"When?!"

Buddha! Give me patience."With Freddie, tell me what happened...better yet...tell me everything. "

Hannibal returns to the library and hefts Bedelia up from her hiding place. Her small frame is birdlike in his arms, more so because of its uncontrollable shaking. "Here we go," he says gaily as he carries her through the front entrance and out to the to the empty, disused, ice house.

Hannibal gently lays the trussed woman onto the marble slab intended for storing meat and dairy products; he smoothes the hair from her face.

"Such gorgeous skin," he murmurs, running his fingers along her cheeks and down her long neck. "Like warm alabaster," he sighs; stooping to smell then lick her pale face. "Mmmmm, salty."

Hannibal pulls-off her blindfold. Blinking, Bedelia stares up at him, but Hannibal's attention is absorbed elsewhere.

"Just look at this," he says admiring the stone. "It's one complete piece...imported from Italy no doubt...beautiful...just beautiful." He looks back at her. "Here, let me loosen those."

Hannibal takes a few moments to make his therapist more comfortable, though he doesn't remove her gag or bindings.

When he's done, he strokes Bedelia's dirty, matted, hair. "Such a naughty, naughty girl," he crones sadly. Slowly, he kisses her cold, stretched lips, savoring the fear and discomfort pouring from her. "A kiss before dying?" He teases.

When a warm tear trickles towards her ear, he sighs contentedly before lapping it up.

Hannibal stands and opens the door. " Goodbye Bedelia."

Bedelia cranes her neck to watch as the door swings shut; sounds of rattling metal, then silence. She scans the dim room. The door is the only way in or out. *First things first, I need a way to get out of these ropes.*

The shelf she's been placed upon is roughly four feet above the floor. *If I don't do this correctly...this could really hurt.*

Slowly, Bedelia slides her legs towards the edge. Her plan is to slide off slowly, maintaining her equilibrium as she goes, but she hasn't taken onto account the slipperiness of the marble; all at once she tumbles off and slams to the ground.

Owwwwww! Shit! I hope I didn't break anything! She lies still, regaining her breath. The surface she's on is poured cement, gritty from sand and ancient sawdust. Groaning with effort, Bedelia wriggles to a standing position. Gingerly, she begins inch-worming along the walls of her new prison. *Not airtight...that's reassuring. At least I won't suffocate.*

In a far corner, the dull sheen of metal attracts her attention; a metal bracket, broken and jagged has come, or been pulled loose. Bedelia's eyes narrow. *Hannibal so adores his games of cat and mouse.*

It takes the woman half an hour to make her way over to where the bracket is. Once there, she rests a bit, before beginning the delicate and dangerous task of cutting through her bindings.

William's recounting of his experiences since Will's kidnapping, culminating in Freddie's murder is done. Depleted, he stares at Will with dull eyes.

Jesus...What has Hannibal done. "William... it's important for you to believe me when I tell you this...every single thing that's happened...none of it's your fault."

The boy shrugs hopelessly and looks away. " I don't really care anymore."

It's all too much; Will feels his mind descending, down to that dark place he'd lived in after Abigail's death. *Hannibal is right...God is nothing but a vivisector. We're all just insects, run through with pins, squirming for His amusement*.

Hannibal returns from the icehouse to his lookout balcony. He immediatly spots Will and William sitting a little apart; they don't appear to be talking. *They've been out there long enough*. He puts his fingers to his lips and whistles.

Will looks over his shoulder at the sound. Hannibal is on an upstairs terrace gesturing for them to return. Will raises a hand in acknowledgement and the other man disappears from sight.

"Time to go inside," Will says, keeping his voice light and inviting. He rises stiffly. "Hey buddy? Let's go get some breakfast."

When William doesn't move, Will lifts him to his feet. "Come on, you'll feel better after you eat."

William closes his eyes and shakes his head.

"You're too big to carry, can you walk please?"

"I'm not going back there."

Great... just great. "Well, you can't stay out here."

William sits back down.

Should I leave him here? Should I force him to go inside? "Even if I were to let you stay here for a few minutes...you're still going to have to come inside eventually."

"No I don't! I can live in the car! Or in that little house!" William looks up, excited and hopeful. "I could eat fish and live on fruit from the garden!"

How long has he been spinning this fantasy? "William...you're being silly. Look at that beautiful mansion! And you have your own room!"

"I like sleeping in cars!"

"No...you're not going to sleep in a car or in that old ice house. It's probably filled with spiders and snakes." *Why are you engaging? Stop engaging*.

"So what!? I like spiders and snakes! And I'm not going back!"

I'm too old for this. "William, I am going to count to three. If you are not up and walking by the time I reach three... I will have Hannibal come out here to get you."

"Thought you said he was sick?" The boy's tone is mocking, but his body language signals defeat.

"He's not feeling well, but he is also your host, and he wants us to come back now. One...two..."

Angry and afraid, William jumps to his feet.

"Thank you," Will says sincerely, putting an apologetic hand on William's shoulder.

"Leave me alone!" William knocks his father's hand off. "Let's just get this over with!"

The boy strides off ahead with Will trailing behind. *Did William actually kill Freddie Lounds? From his descriptions, it sounds as though he's been experiencing fugue episodes. Then again, he does remember Bedelia giving him 'medicine.' I need to find out from her what really happened. I wouldn't put it past her to have planted a few, false memories.*

Will's mind races with unsavory scenarios as he follows his son to the vine covered pergola where Hannibal and a hot breakfast awaits.

Hannibal smiles a greeting to Will and turns to examine William; the boy radiates hostility in spite of his wan and exhausted appearance. "Did you enjoy your walk?"

"Yes, Dr. Lecter." *Dr. Cocksucker.*

"Good." He frowns at the child's sandy feet. "Just this once, you may go inside with sand on your feet to wash."

Giving Hannibal wide berth, William goes into the kitchen to wash his hands. Through the window he spies Hannibal pull Will into his arms, and begin kissing him passionately. *Whoooa.* Eyes glued to the sight, the boy turns on the water and grabs a bar of soap. Then William witnesses something shocking; Will cradling Hannibal's head between his own palms and kissing back.

Oh...my...gosh! William squeezes the soap and it squirts out of his hands. *Dad is totally gay for Hannibal!*

A few minutes later, Will enters the kitchen, a small, pleased smile on his face. "Nearly done?" He asks, chummily as he begins rolling up his sleeves. William moves away from the sink. "Yeah...you can use it now."

"Thank you."

Chewing a thumbnail, William watches his father carefully soap and rinse his hands. *He's so different now! When we were at his house, we never washed our hands, or ate at the table, or used stupid, girly handkerchiefs!*

Will dries his hands and smiles cheerily. "I'm starving! Let's go eat!"

As William takes his seat, he feels Hannibal's eyes upon him so he carefully drapes his napkin across his lap. *There ya go wierdo*.

"Very good...now..." Hannibal waits until the boy is looking at him before continuing."In our home William, you may eat as much or as little as you wish...but if you are served something, you must eat it. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Dr. Lecter."

Hannibal smiles and nods. "Good! Now, since you are the guest of honor, I will serve you first. What would you like?"

"Ummm...just a little bit of eggs, and toast... please." He tacks on for good measure.

Hannibal scoops small portions onto a plate. "No fruit? And what about the sausage? It's homemade and very delicious!"

William rolls his eyes from Hannibal to Will, who looks ill at ease, and back again. "Um...no thank you."

"Alright, but if you change your mind, there's plenty."

"Okay...thanks." *Eww...maybe it's that dude 'Claws.'*

When Hannibal begins serving Will, the boy notices his father isn't consulted on his preferences, Hannibal simply spoons heaping portions of each item onto Will's plate.

By the time Hannibal is done, Will's plate is piled-high with eggs, toast, and a thick tower of sausage. Then Hannibal serves himself and looks around the table. "Shall we begin?"

William watches the adults tuck-in. *Nasty! They've like the parents in "Spirited Away"...right before they turn into pigs.* William feels like he might barf so he gulps water to settle his stomach. *What if he does that to Bedelia? Will dad eat her? Would they force me to?*

William hears his own name and snaps to attention; Hannibal is speaking to Will.

"Yes...I think it is an ideal trip for him. I would love to take you and William along the Piero della Francesca trail...there's no better way to experience the master's genius."

William has no idea what any of that meant, but it's making his father unhappy.

The meal goes on and on.

Eventually, William stops trying to follow the adult's conversation. He finds it's hard work to eat the small portions on his plate and sip the strange, cloying juice. As he robotically chews and swallows, he thinks longingly of breakfasts at Will's little, white house.

William stops mid-chew; he's sitting on his dad's porch, surrounded by drooling dogs, eating warm, syrupy, flapjacks. He closes his eyes, the better to savor the sweetness of the memory. *Mmmmmm...blueberry pancakes.* Too soon he's jarred from his reverie; Hannibal is speaking to him. *Ugh! What's the prick saying now?*

"Did you hear what we were discussing William?"

"Not really."

Hannibal wonders what pleasant daydream the boy had been experiencing. *I must remember to ask him.* "About how exciting it will be for you to explore the catacombs with your father and myself?"

Cata-what? What's he talking about!? William shrugs; he looks at Will who looks away. "Sounds okay."

"More than okay, I think! And while we're there, we shall stay in a medieval castle! With its own moat, and dungeon, and parapets!"

William smiles weakly. "Sounds...cool."

Hannibal laughs. "It is! Very cool!" He places his silverware along the edge of his plate and rests his elbows on the table. "So...you've heard a bit about our interests...why don't you tell us yours? Where would you like to go?"

The tension radiating from Will ratchets-up ten notches.

"Ummm...America...I guess. Since I'm going back home."

Hannibal's faint brows knot a moment before smoothing out. He settles back against his chair and takes-up his silverware. "You are home, William," he says, paring egg with a slice of sausage." We are your home now...your father and myself."

William's mouth gapes.

"And, as such, I would feel honored if you were to begin addressing me as tėvelis...which translates roughly to 'daddy.' Or perhaps you would prefer, 'tėtis,' which means 'dad.' Which shall it be?"

What the hell?! William realizes his mouth his is still open. He snaps it shut. "Mmm..."

"Hannibal..."

"Will, please. William's choice of address is very important to me."

Will practically slams down his coffee cup but stays silent.

Whipped, is William's nasty assessment.

Such a good boy, is Hannibal's.

"Would you like to hear the choices again? Tėvelis," he enunciates slowly, " or tėtis...can you repeat them both?"

Hannibal corrects William's pronunciation until it meets with his approval. "Excellent!" He praises. "Your pronunciation is very good...Will? I think we have a natural born linguist on our hands!"

Will smile appears absent minded, but William's empathy is providing him with a very different story. *Dad is seriously pissed at Hannibal right now*.

"So...which is it to be?"

"Um... tėtis, I guess."

"Fine," Hannibal smiles appreciatively." Tėtis, it is."

Hannibal notices William's empty plate. "Would you like more of anything? I can reheat the sausages if you'd like to try one now."

Never. "No thanks, I'm full...can I be excused?"

Will sits bolt-upright. "I think you should wait for us."

"No, it's quite alright... William? You may go anywhere in this house, with only three exceptions. The attic; the floor there is rotted through, the master bedroom, " he winks at Will, "and our private bathroom."

"Hannibal..." *What is he doing?*

"Will, I understand your concern...trust me...you have nothing to worry about."

Will nods brusquely. *He's moved her.*

William looks from adult to adult. *Doesn't Hannibal know where Bedelia is?* "Can I look around outside too?"

Hannibal defers the question to Will.

"Yes, but don't go onto the beach without one of us."

Hannibal nods with approval. "Excellent! So... where are you allowed?"

"Everywhere but the attic, your...bedroom, your bathroom and the beach by myself."

"Good boy. No... don't bother busing your dishes. I will teach you my method after lunch." William sets his plate back down. "Why don't you go upstairs, make your bed and then explore?" Hannibal stares pointedly at the boy's feet."Brush your feet off before you go inside, and I would like you to begin wearing the sandals I purchased you."

William sighs. "Fine. Is that all?"

"Is that all..."

"Is that all... tėtis?"

"Thank you. Yes, that is all for now. Tonight after dinner I will explain our house rules, routines, and expectations of behavior...now off you go, angelėli, " the ironic endearment comes easily," and have fun!"

As soon as he's brushed off his feet, William runs into the house. *Bedelia first.*

Back on the lanai, Will sits, brooding over his coffee, a quarter of his food sits untouched. Hannibal's eyes dance with merriment. *Will! That is a poor example to set for an impressionable child.*

Pleased with himself, Hannibal allows Will to sulk in silence as he finishes his meal. *William...what a capricious, little rascal he is turning-out to be. I wonder if he's already discovered Bedelia is gone. Perhaps he will imagine he hallucinated her?*

As Hannibal prepares his final bite, a saying his uncle often quoted floats up from his memory.

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."

Just so Uncle Robertus...just so. A shared life, and now a family, with Will...so much to look forward to.

Author's note: if it seems that I use too many explanation points for William's dialogue/thoughts- it's because, in my personal experience, kids are shouty.

"Sympathize?! Sympathy is next to shit in the dictionary, and I can't even read"!"- from I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

(one of the most beautiful books ever written IMO)

(A. Note: Jack was the one who taught this saying to William)

A Kiss Before Dying- a novel by Ira Levin.

"Hannibal is right...God is nothing but a vivisector."-Will is referencing C.S.Lewis " A Grief Observed":

"And I must surely admit — H. would have forced me to admit is a few passes — that, if my house was a house of cards, the sooner it was knocked down the better. And only suffering could do it. But then the Cosmic Sadist and Eternal vivisector becomes an unnecessary hypothesis" (38).

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end" -Seneca the Elder or Marcus Annaeus Seneca (54 BC – 39 AD)

angelėli- little angel (source A03 user Anne)-
An endearment purposely chosen because Hannibal plans on taking his boys to Vilnius, Lithuania - http://zuokas.lt/vilnius-city-of-low-flying-angels

Chapter End Notes

Comments are much appreciated...especially with regards to reader's views on a canon Hannibal wanting kids.

In the books, Hanniba isn't interested in kids...though I always wondered if he would have bitten that boy he met on the plane if given the chance. The world may never know.

Caterpillar or Ant?

Chapter Summary

Hannibal has a chat with William.

Chapter Notes

sorry this chapter took so long...messing with half truths is hard to write!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

William peers beneath the desk. *Nothing's there!* The faintest whiff of urine tickles his nose. *But someone was!* He ducks under, searching for more clues.

"Have you lost something?"

William slams his head against the drawer. "Owww!"

"Careful!" Tickled, Hannibal watches the boy vigorously rub his head. "Good thing you have so much hair, that was quite a bonk."

Whoa...head rush. Bonk?! "I'm fine."

" Don't forget I am a doctor, would you like me to take a look?" Hannibal is only teasing but William is not amused.

"No! ... I mean...I'm okay. Where's my dad?" William asks nonchalantly as he walks toward the door; every voice in his head is begging him to 'RUN!'

"I've sent your father into the village on an errand."

Oh...my... God! No witnesses!

Distracted, William stumbles against a table and knocks over a lamp; Hannibal is suddenly right beside him catching it.

"Ooops! Let's try and not destroy the priceless antiques. Have you finished tidying your room and making your bed?"

William feels as though electricity is pulsing through his arms and legs; *zingzingzing*. He's nearly at the door. "I was just about to go finish."

"I see...under normal circumstances, William, lying to me would earn you a punishment." William's hears a strange 'squeak' when his throat tightens; he freezes, half-in and half-out of the room. "But since we are still getting to know one another, these are not normal circumstances."

What does that mean?! William swallows to keep his breakfast juice from coming back up.

" I'm not going to hurt you William, I don't believe in corporal punishment for children. I would just like to speak with you...we haven't had much of an opportunity for that yet." Concerned the child might vomit or dirty himself, Hannibal changes tactics. *Perhaps the direct approach is more effective*. "If I had wanted to kill you, which I don't, I would have already done it."

He's admitting to it! William grabs his stomach. "I think I'm..."

"No you're not...here." Hannibal spreads his hands over the boy's chest, finding his GB21 acupressure point and applies pressure. William stiffens, and his pulse rate increases, but his nausea symptoms appear to improve. Hannibal slides his hands off. "Better?"

William nods, just to keep Hannibal from touching him again. "When is he coming back?"

"An hour, more or less. Let's go outside for our talk, shall we?"

"Okay," William replies, obediently following Hannibal through the house and out to the garden. *So where's Bedelia?*

From his spot outside, Will catches sight of Hannibal and William walking though the garden. He creeps closer, but not close enough to hear every word. *Hopefully that also means I'll evade detection.*

"Here's a lovely place." Hannibal waves a hand at a bench set beneath fragrant Cascarillas and flowering bushes; a location he's intentionally chosen for its olfactory markers. "Seeing as how you've already enjoyed a walk on the beach today, let us have our chat in the garden."

Ha ha...very funny. William shrugs.

"Is that a 'yes'?'"

"Yes... tėtis," William snarks and is amazed when Hannibal throws back his head and laughs.

"Very good! Just so, ožiukas!"

Still chuckling Hannibal takes a seat, patting the space beside him. "Come...sit."

Ignoring the suggestion, William walks to the far end of the bench and climbs on, but has trouble settling down.

"William." The man's voice is drained of its former warmth. "Are you in some sort of pain?"

William groans. "No! I'm hungry!" *And I'm sitting on a bench with a crazy person!*

Hannibal consults his watch. "Lunch is not for another four hours, you may eat then; but I'm not surprised, you didn't eat enough at breakfast."

"Yeah! Cuz I'm not a cannibal!"

As soon as the words leave his mouth, William regrets them. *Fuck!* "Sorry," he says quickly, ducking his head.

Will wonders at the boy's sudden, submissive body language. *I hope he's keeping a civil tongue...shit! What if I have to take him and leave?* The idea of leaving Hannibal sends a sick ache through him. *Am I strong enough to do that?*

Oddly, Hannibal does not anger at William's rudeness. Seemingly unruffled, he shuts his eyes, tilts his head back and inhales. "Mmmmm...Do you smell that?"

William peeps warily up through his lashes. *He's not mad?* "What?"

"Close your eyes and smell...really smell the air around us."

Hannibal demonstrates again; closing his eyes and filling his lungs, but when he checks on the child, William is staring at him. "I'm attempting to teach you something, William...how to ground yourself when you are feeling angry or upset...now close your eyes and breathe; slowly and deeply."

William squints and breathes-in quickly. "So?"

"No, all the way closed and breathe more slowly. Do it again, and this time, see if you can describe to me three, separate scents."

No sooner has Hannibal given this instruction when his body goes still. *Will? Why are you here? Don't you trust me with the boy?*

A moment later, Will feels the wind shift. *Shit!* He backs-out of his hiding place and sets- off running. As he makes his way to the other side of the house, he tests the air. *Damn! It's no use... there's no where I can go without blowing my cover. But...they did seem fine...and there is only twenty minutes left...I'm going to take one last look.*

William and Hannibal are in the same spot, deep in quiet conversation. *I'll check with William later...I'm going back to the car.*

As he walks away, Will's mind shuttles back and forth with the problem of William.

Stay...leave...stay...leave. I need to figure this out...shit.

Not once, does he spare a thought to Bedelia or her fate.

Unaware of his father's locomotions, and hoping to stay on Hannibal's good side, William has closed his eyes and begun sniffing the air. "Umm...okay... I smell the ocean...wet grass...and...wood."

That he also recognizes at least three scents which remind him of his mother is something he'll never divulge.

"Good boy!" Hannibal praises. *Interesting...he clearly recognized his mother-triggers, but chose not to share them. Trust issues,* Hannibal's mouth quirks, *a family pathology*. "William, did you know that scent is important for our overall well being, on par with proper hygiene and nutrition?"

"It is?"

"Of course! Humans have created and worn scent for thousands of years."

"Cavemen wore perfume?!"

What kind of education has this child been receiving?! "No...not as far back as that. Think more along the lines of Africa and what is now termed the Middle East; the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Babylonia."

"Hmmm...We haven't learned about that in school yet." William sticks his nose up and sniffs. "But I hate those stinky, soap shops in the mall." Though it's true, William wishes now he hadn't shared his complaint; it feels like a betrayal.

Hannibal laughs, pleased. During his visit to the boy's former home, he had nearly gagged from the stench of the mother's low-end toiletries.

"We share that in common, young man. One day, you shall accompany me to the Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella in Florence and learn how true perfumes are created."

Ignoring the boy's dubious expression, Hannibal picks-up his tablet. "Now, if I may, I would like to show you something." He swipes the screen and a set of photos appear.

William shivers involuntarily."Something about perfumes?" *No...not perfume...something...something about mom?*

"No, but I believe you will find it just as interesting."

Hannibal tilts the device.

It takes a moment for William to process what he is seeing; when he does, he jerks backwards, his foot knocking the tablet from Hannibal's hands. "What is that?!" He squeals, and would have bolted if not for the grip Hannibal has on his wrist.

"Stop struggling and I will explain. If you pull like that, I might accidently injure you.

William stops pulling. He watches with loathing as Hannibal plucks the tablet from a bush. "Not broken!" The man notes happily. "Here, sit beside me berniukas." Hannibal pulls the reluctant child close; William is trembling with adrenaline.

With a firm thumb, Hannibal massages the boy's scalp, from the bottom of his mastoid process up to the tip of his occipital bone, making certain to keep clear of the more vulnerable parts of the neck.

"No one is going to hurt you ever again," Hannibal murmurs as he rubs, "These picture are my proof, my pledge to you of that."

Eyes screwed shut, William cowers on the bench, he doesn't like the feeling of Hannibal's hands on him, or how they're sitting so smushed-up together. "I don't wanna look at that."

Hannibal gently rests his hand on the base of the boy's skull. "I understand, but it's important that we face our fears, even when we are young. And you have already proven to your father and myself that you an exceptionally brave, little boy."

Hannibal's praise is like cool, calming salve to William's smarting machinsmo. *I AM brave!* His eyes pop open. *Who's he calling little?!* " I'm not little! I'm eleven!"

Hannibal smiles; the mite's affect is so endearingly defiant. "I did not mean that in a disrespectful way. It's just that I believe you are wise beyond your years...I know you were instrumental in helping the FBI identify the man in these photos."

Wide-eyed, William pivots to gawk at him.

"You see, William?" Hannibal "The Consoler" is now in full spate. "There is nothing about you that I don't know, nothing about you that could ever shock, or disappoint me." William looks away. "And nothing that I would not do to protect you or your father."

Hannibal holds-up the retrieved tablet.

"Including killing the man who murdered your mother."

Hannibal's words have an unexpected and unforeseen effect; William wrenches away from the caressing hand and jumps to his feet.

"Don't you talk 'bout her!" He screams into Hannibal's placid face." Don't you ever talk 'bout her! You told me she was a liar! She never lied to me! You! You're the liar! Go ahead! Kill me! I don't care!"

Hannibal is legitimately surprised by the boy's response. *Curious how he is locked-onto that one, small, slight.* He raises his hands appeasingly. "Don't be ridiculous, William. I would never kill you. But I apologize for saying that to you, it was cruel and churlish; I'm sorry."

This time, Hannibal's soothing words have little effect.

"My mom was not a liar! She was the best! The best mom in the whole world!"

Sedation may be in order. "I believe you William. From all accounts, your mother was an exemplary person...I'm sorry."

Depleted, William's shoulders slump, he begins sinking to the paving stones; Hannibal catches him and swings him up and onto the bench. "Sit here berniukas."

Reenergized, William squirms to get away."I don't wanna sit next to you!"

"I understand. You're upset," Hannibal effortlessly holds the boy in place," but it is better if you stay here, away from those swarming fire ants; their stings are very nasty."

Distracted, William looks down; Hannibal is telling the truth."So!? We have fire ants in Georgia. Big ones!"

"Have you?" Holding the boy firmly, Hannibal resumes the slow, steady massage of his scalp. " Hmmm...now that you mention it, I believe I have read that somewhere. Now, please, stay with me...you look a bit woozy."

I do feel kinda dizzy. "I'm okay," William grumbles; though if he were being truthful, Hannibal's massage does feel good.

"Thank you." Hannibal takes a discrete whiff. The boy reeks of distress, but not fear. *Strange, considering the severity of his empathy disorder...and Bedelia ruled-out Weithe Disease...*

William stares straight ahead, stoically defiant. "My dad said you had something to do with...with what happened to my mom."

"In a roundabout way, I did. Your mother's murder was a poor substitute for my own."

Ever since the moment he'd met Hannibal, William has struggled to read him; now, his eyes dart nervously around the garden as he parses Hannibal's words. "'A substitute?' You don't look anything like her!"

"That's not quite what I meant, William, although intelligence is not the source of Mr. Verger's infamy."

"That guy with the horses? He killed her when he was supposed to kill you?"

"Yes."

"That doesn't even make sense!"

A budding logician as well? Hannibal's tone darkens. "William," the man chides," you asked me a question which I have truthfully answered. If you are unable to engage in a calm, rational conversation, then you should return to your room."

"No! Please! I wanna stay! "

Like fish in a barrel. Hannibal smiles. "Alright, because you have asked so nicely," his countenance sobers." You would like to know why Mr. Verger would wish you and your mother harm?"

William swallows and nods.

" Because Mason was, and still is engaged in a vendetta against me. Unfortunately, being too stupid to locate my whereabouts, he took his rage out on two innocents...your father would have been next."

William feels nauseous. "Cuz of what you and dad did to him," he whispers.

"Did your father discuss that with you?" Hannibal's voice is sharp with suspicion.

"No! I...I just figured it out when I was there...with Mr. Verger. He told me he was going to kill you and dad when he found you...then he let me see his face." William shivers.

"Did he now." *That is a sight I am looking forward to seeing ...perhaps next spring?*

But William is no longer attending, his attention being diverted elsewhere; a long trail of ants, toting a plump, writhing, caterpillar. *He's still alive...they're gonna eat him alive.*

Hannibal watches the boy watch the ants. "So... you met Master Mason...even stole a peep at his face. What a sick, twisted young man he is." Hannibal sounds thrilled at William's admission. He proffers the tablet once more. "Which shall it be William? Ant or caterpillar?"

A beat passes before the boy comprehends the man's meaning, when he does, he angrily snatches the iPad from Hannibal's hand and looks.

The pictures are all of the same man he'd seen in the coroner's office. A thick wire dangles loosely around his neck. His mouth is open wide, eyes bulging in terror. *He's still alive.* William closes his eyes, overcome by a surge of fierce, unholy joy. *How'd you like that, fucker?! Huh? How'd it feel?! Hope you're burnin' in Hell right now!* He hands the iPad back."Thank you," he says earnestly.

Preening, Hannibal glances at the screen; a craftsman appreciating his work. "You're welcome."

" Mr. Crawford thought you'd run away, but you were in America this whole time." William stares into the middle distance. "That was such a long time ago..."

Ah, to be young, when every day feels like a month. "For you, it must seem so, for an adult, not all that long ago." Hannibal assumes his most penitent expression. "But to be fair, Jack was correct about one thing; I was far away when your mother was murdered...all the way in Italy. That was where I read about the FBI's investigating your her death."

The last two words make William's insides go wobbly. Bedelia had warned him time and time again that Hannibal was a liar, a deceiver. But here he was, answering all of William's questions and what's more, admitting to everything. *Maybe Bedelia didn't really know him!*

"But..." William screws up his courage," you didn't just kill this guy! You killed John, and that old man."

Oh dear, the bodies do tend to pile-up. "I did...I freely admit to doing all those horrible, horrible things. But William, at the time, I had no other option, your friend John was trying to kill me."

William looks mutinous. " I bet he was only trying to help my dad!"

Hannibal switches to his most sympathetic look. "No, William," he says sadly, "your father was coming with me of his own free will. John attacked me then knocked your father unconscious. It was never our plan to hurt anyone."

"*He was mine before he was yours."* Hannibal's mocking statement of ownership rings through William's head. His old grievance flares with fresh pain. "You dumped me!"

This child has a bright future as a trial lawyer... or a Red Judge. "At that point William, I was injured and losing copious amounts of blood. I had to take your father and myself away as quickly as possible. I hope you will forgive me...just as I forgave you for giving me that injury... just as your father has forgiven me for giving him his."

Before the boy has a chance to ask another question, Hannibal swoops-in for the kill.

"William," Hannibal speaks slowly, as if he's only now coming to a realization." Have you ever found yourself doing something, even though you know it to be wrong? Yet you did it anyway, because you had no other choice?"

The child is silent; Hannibal studies him from his peripheral vision. " William," Hannibal's tone is mournful, rather than accusatory, "what compelled you to kill Ms. Lounds? That was not part of the plan we discussed in the car."

William's body goes icy then hot again. "I...it...it just happened."

"No...you killed her because you had no other option."

William begins to cry." I don't know...she was always nice to me...I..."

Hannibal leans down until his mouth is inches away from the boy's ear. "I do know William," he murmurs quietly. "And I also know that Ms. Lounds and Dr. Du Maurier were not the kind, trustworthily women you believed them to be...they used you, vaikelis. They used you and your father to get closer to me. "

William passes his hands over his eyes, but he's listening.

"Ms. Lounds, Dr. Chilton, Dr. Du Maurier; they were all working together. Once they found me their plan was to lock you and your father up, and sell me to Mr. Verger."

Hannibal's words buzz like wasps in William's head. *Lock me up? The hospital? Dr. Bug Eyes? Sell?* He shakes his head vigorously. "No, no, no. That's not right! You wanted me to come!"

"No, William. Your father and I were in agreement; it was in your own, best interest to remain in America."

"She said it was your idea!"

"She blackmailed us. She threatened to hurt you unless we permitted her to come."

"She was gonna kill you and bring dad home!"

"William," Hannibal scolds, "have you been attending to a word I've said? Bedelia never meant to kill me; why do you suppose there was only one gun? It was to ensure you did not kill me in a blind fury." *And what a fortuitous misstep that turned out be.*

"That was a mistake! The guy couldn't get two!"

Hannibal looks thoughtful. "Bedelia always was the consummate actress."

" Where is she!? I wanna ask her!" William tries to stand.

Hannibal pushes him back down. "Don't be obtuse, William. Sit still and listen to me. Bedelia took you from a good, kind foster family, dressed you in a way guaranteed to humiliate you, then transported you half way across the world, to the home of two known fugitives? Think! Are those the actions of a friend!?"

Oh my God! He's right! This all my fault...cuz...cuz I wanted to be with dad! William crumples under the weight of his epiphany.

Hannibal breathes a sigh of contentment masked as sympathy. *What a good thing he mirrors his father's tendencies; so quick to take- on the mantle of guilt and responsibility*.

Tentatively, Hannibal wraps an arm around the scrawny back; William's vertebrae dig into his forearm. *Bedelia is right, he is too thin*.

William leans into the embrace.

Good boy. Hannibal gives William a slight squeeze. "There's something you must understand about me William. I do not trust or love many; but when I do, I love them with all my heart."

"You love my dad?" The child whispers forlornly.

Since the moment we met. "Yes, and now I love you as well."

Flattered yet embarrassed, William turns his face away.

Hannibal watches the boy's downy cheeks and ears tinge rose. "I believe you to be a very special person, William Wyse, I have always believed that."

He's telling the truth. Overcome, William shakes his head.

"Why do you doubt me? Would I risk capture to avenge your mother's death or deliver those letters for someone unworthy of my affection?"

The letters! William can't believe he'd forgotten about the letters. He stares up into the hooded brown eyes. "I don't know..."

Covered in ants, and half-dead from venom, the caterpillar disappears into the ant hill.

"Then know it now. We, all three, of us belong to one another now; we are a family."

William blinks to fight-off tears. For months, the only constant in his world has been his hatred for this man. Now, just when he needs it most, his anger has evaporated, leaving him vulnerable and adrift. He bites the inside of his mouth. *Now what'm I supposed to do?* A tremor passes through him. "So it's true...isn't it."

Truth now? You have the soul of a philosopher young William. "Is what true ožiukas ?" Hannibal's eyes shine with exasperated fondness.

"That...that you eat people?" William forces himself to maintain eye contact as he waits for an answer.

Abstractly, Hannibal studies the boy's neck; it's unmarred, satiny skin, straining tendons, fluttering pulse and feels the onset of a craving. *I wonder where I can purchase a whole suckling kid? I feel like curry*. "Parts of them...yes I do."

Hannibal the Cannibal...Freddie was right. "And...my dad?"

"More infrequently... but yes."

Dad? No! "Why?" William holds his breath, the better to hear Hannibal's answer. Seconds tick past, Hannibal appears lost in thought.

William takes a shuddering breath and slots his head under Hannibal's chin.

Pleasantly surprised, Hannibal rests his head atop the boy's. *He's crying*. Hannibal rubs his cheek against the child's salt-sticky curls a few times, listening to William's soft, quick breathes, the rattling of palm fronds, and the dull roar of the ocean.

Finally, he speaks.

"That, dear William, is a story for another time and place." He presses a kiss to the boy's head to soften his answer.

"Mmmmm, " the boy mumbles; William is falling asleep.

Hannibal playfully jostles him awake. "Rise and shine sleepy head! Enough of this doom and gloom!"

William sits-up, rubbing his eyes. "Huh?"

"I know what we can do that would be fun!"

Is he kidding? "I don't want to do anything."

"William," Hannibal stands and begins brushing and adjusting his clothing."You have been reunited with a father you've desperately missed, you have your own, private beach." Hannibal slumps his head and shoulders miming weariness, "And I have just answered many," his shoulders droop lower," many... many of your burning questions." Hannibal's head pops-up like a Jack in the Box. "Time for something fun!"

William smiles sheepishly at the man's antics.

"Come!" Hannibal pulls William to his feet. "You are too young to be a nihilist! Time to play a bit. And tonight we shall have a feast!"

"Will Bedelia be there?"

Hannibal playfully boops the boy's nose with a forefinger. "You never know with Bedelia!" William frowns and rubs his nose. "How about this...I help you tidy your room, and then we go swimming. Do you know how?"

William's narrow chest inflates from indignation. "Of course I know how to swim!"

When Hannibal smiles, William no longer finds it creepy, merely annoying. "Good! And I believe there are rafts and sand toys in the garage...or are you too old to build sandcastles?"

He's teasing me again. William takes a chance with the truth. "I like building sandcastles," he admits shyly," cuz they aren't just for little kids anymore! They have competitions for adults and everything."

"I'm glad katinėlis !" Hannibal's smile is genuine rather than calculated." I haven't built a sandcastle in years. I wonder if I still remember how."

"I can show you," William innocently offers.

A good beginning. "I would appreciate the help." The man holds out a hand. "Shall we?" *Too far, too soon?*

William hesitates before slipping his hand into Hannibal's. "Just so's you know..." The boy lectures as they walk down the pathway to the house, "in America, boys my age don't hold hands with their parents."

Parents. Hannibal squeezes the boy's hand then stops to look down at him. "I lost my father before I turned eleven... what I would give, to have just one more day with him...simply to hold his hand or see his face."

William is nearly overwhelmed by sadness. *I know what that's like*."It's okay," he says, timidly, " if you want to hold hands...when we're at home."

Home. Koks tėvas, toks ir sūnus. "Thank you, William, coming from you, that means a lot."

Outside in the icehouse, dehydrated and hungry, Bedelia slips into another restless doze. Her last thought as she presses her face to the door crack and it's blessed fresh air, is that perhaps, hers is not to be a happy ending after all.

When Will pulls up to the garage, Hannibal and William are already walking down the sloping lawn to meet him.

William looks happier than Will can recall seeing him since Wolf Trap. *Hannibal is a miracle worker. I should have trusted him.* Guilt blooms in his gut. "Hey! What're you two up to? Going to the beach?"

"We're going swimming!"

"Great! Let me get my suit and join you."

Hannibal's eyes bore into Will. *Guilt-ridden...good!* Hannibal's buoyant mood soars even higher. *He'll want to make it up to me then.* He catches Will's eye and winks.

Instantly, Will's guilt lessens.

"Will? A reliable source has just informed me that building sand castles is no longer considered solely an activity for children."

Hannibal's horny. Good! That makes two of us! "Absolutely! William? Have Hannibal build you St. Paul's Cathedral...or better yet, Gaudi's cathedral."

"I could do that," Hannibal banters back," but naturally it would be incomplete."

William looks from Will to Hannibal and back again. *Gross..they're eye fucking. Dad's such a nerd... I wonder if he even knows what that is? I bet Hannibal does!* The boy giggles.

Will tears his eyes off his lover. "And what is so funny Buster?"

"Noooothiiing," William drawls. "Come on tėtis!" He demands without an ounce of irony." Let's get the stuff and go!"

Will's eyebrow's shoot-up; Hannibal smirks back at him as he follows William to the garage. "Will? My eyes are up here." Will grins wolfishly and resumes staring at Hannibal's ass. "Your swim briefs are laid-out on the bed."

"Okay, thanks."

"You're welcome... and one more thing."

Will pauses on his way back up the lawn." Yes?"

"You should be aware that it's BYOBT."

"BYOBT?"

Laden with an armful of buckets, sand molds, and trowels, William catapults out of the garage. "Bring your own beach towel!" He crows, dumping his treasures onto the ground, and giggling at Hannibal's expression of exaggerated despair. *Maybe being here isn't gonna be so bad after all!*

Chapter End Notes

Ta da!
Hannibal has done it again!

I'm feeling like we need a sex scene- any takers?
Cast your vote :-)

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Slender Man

Chapter Summary

William roams around the house at night. Will and Hannibal enjoy some grown-up time together.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Did you brush your teeth? And where are your pajamas?"

"I'm too tireeeed...and they're in the drawer." Dressed only in briefs, William makes an exaggerated display of exhaustion as he climbs onto the tall bedstead. "When can I get some normal underwear? These are weird."

Will laughs. *Hannibal has his work cut out for him*. "Go brush your teeth then we'll talk."

William buries his head under a pillow and begins snoring.

"One..."

"Fine!"

Showing a surprising amount of energy for someone professing exhaustion, William rolls off the bed with a loud *THUMP* and runs into the bathroom.

"I heard a noise."

Will jumps; Hannibal is behind him.

Shit...that startled me. "William jumped off the bed."

"I see...perhaps we should encourage him not to do that."

"Aye, Aye Skipper!" Will says snapping his best military salute.

"Mmmhmm...are you nearly done here?"

"Yup, shouldn't take long, he's exhausted."

"Good. I'll see you soon." Hannibal places a quick kiss on Will's shoulder. "Good night William, sleep well!"

William appears at the entrance of the bathroom, wiping toothpaste onto the back of his hand. "Nite!"

Hannibal smiles and glides out of the room.

"He moves like Slender Man," William blurts out. *Shit...why did I just say that in this spooky house? I wish I'd never watched that episode!*

Will shakes his head; the boy is frightened. " You don't need to worry about that, William, that is all make believe...and no way was that two minutes buster!"

William smiles manically. "It's fine! " He says, blowing-out his breath towards his father. " Wanna smell my breeeeath ?"

"No thank you! Hop back-up."

William settles back onto the bed and pulls the sheet up. The wind from the ceiling fan lifts the boy's freshly washed, trimmed hair into a fluffy halo; he is suddenly serious. "Not everything is make believe; Hannibal's real...Mason's real."

Will sighs and sits on the side of the bed. "You're right, they are."

William chews a thumb nail. "What's a 'nilelist'?"

"A 'nihilist'? That's a person who doesn't think anything about the world is good."

"I'm not one of those!"

Will smiles." Did someone say that you were?"

"Hannibal...he said I'm too young to be one."

Will pats William's foot. "He was teasing, William. You can't take everything he says to heart."

William sits back against the pillows. Will feels the boy's thoughts and emotions building; a hornets' nest right before a swarm. "What?"

"You should have told me the truth..." William looks crestfallen." I would have understood. And then John wouldn't have gotten killed."

What did Hannibal tell him? "Hold-on a second, William."

Will gets up to shut the door.

Behind the wall, Hannibal closes his eyes, presses his ear to the vent and concentrates; it's no use, voices are obscured by the fan. Hannibal exits the inner passage and goes to draw a bath.

Unfortunate...I'll just allow them another few minutes. I wonder which Will prefers...pear or lemon grass?

William watches Will's actions contumeliously. "If you don't trust him, why are you still with him?" *Why would mom ever date you?*

Will settles back down on the bed. "It's...complicated. But what were you saying before? About John?"

Will's words make William see red. *Oh! So you want me to tell you everything, but you won't tell me anything?! Fuck you!* "Nothing...nevermind."

"No, not 'nevermind.' What about John? Whatever you think you know, William, there was nothing you could have done to save your friend...I'm sorry."

"No! If you'd told me the truth about you and Hannibal, I wouldn't have come!"

"I see... what did Hannibal tell you?"

"Tons of stuff! He knows I can handle it."

Oh God."Okay, good. I'm glad you two are getting along. So... what sort of 'stuff' did you talk about?"

Why don't you go ask him!? "I don't know...stuff! Like how you two ran away together like little, love birds." William closes his eyes and makes obnoxious kissing noises. Will's eyes narrow but he remains silent; the boy sobers again. "And how Bedelia was going to turn us in so she could get that reward from Mason...and how he was gonna get his revenge on you guys...you know... **stuff**."

"Okay, I believe you. Did he speak to you at all about your mother?"

William's attitude shifts from cocky to distressed. "He told me how he killed that fucker! Cuz the fucking FBI was just sitting around scratching their butts!"

Will is dismayed, and not merely by the language. "That is a lot of fucks," he remarks dryly. "You need to clean-up your language, young man."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah...your turn...where's Bedelia?"

Dead, I assume. "I don't know."

Seriously? Hannibal tells him shit! "Don't you think you should find out? I mean, I don't get it...is Hannibal like the man and you're like the woman?"

Offended, Will stands. "If you don't want to be treated like a little boy, William, " the child's chin juts up defiantly," then stop acting like one. "

William humphs as his father walks to the door. *Pussy!*

Already ashamed by his outburst, Will pauses, with his hand on the knob.

The child cocks his head and studies his father's profile. "You're really different around him. It's like you're two different people... and you can't make-up your mind which one you are."

From the mouth of babes. "William..."

"Nite." William interrupts and lies down. *He's so stupid now, wish I'd never come.*

"Goodnight William, sleep well."

"Okay."

Will turns off the light and shuts the door.

William closes his eyes against the breeze from the fan. *I wonder if they'll check on me. Nah, they'll be too busy having S E X. Kissing and blow jobs and...what was all that shit Chase and those guys would joke about? Rims? Rimming?* William shudders. *Why would you stick your tongue up someone's poo hole? I wonder which one of them takes it up the butt?* William squirms at the image of Hannibal and Will in bed. *That fuckhead doctor who stuck all those Qtips up my ass,* William heats red at the memory, *that was horrible! And they're going to fit a whole dick up there?!*

William turns toward the window and watches the sheer drapes move in the breeze. The upper pane of the transom window is open, allowing the sounds of the ocean to mingle with the *whopwhopwhop* of the fan.
Man...I'm tired...maybe I'll just rest my eyes before I go look around. It's nice being so near the ocean...

William is asleep.

Still mulling over his aborted conversation with his son, Will wanders back to the master bedroom.

"Will?" Hannibal is undressed and in his robe.

"Hmm?"

"Is he settled?"

"Yes, he could barely keep his eyes open."

"Will he remain in his bed?" Hannibal asks, making his way to the bathroom with Will absentmindedly trailing behind.

"He did...back when he lived with me. But I don't how he is now. " Will follows Hannibal into the bathroom and blinks with surprise; the room is filled with fragrant steam. "Are you taking a bath?"

Hannibal swirls the foamy water with a hand and smiles, up and over his shoulder. "Yes, we are," he says, untying and shrugging off his robe so it ripples to the tiles. Hannibal is already sporting a huge, curved, erection.

Fuck he looks good. Will unconsciously bites his lip. "Mmmm, good idea...but what about William?"

"I've locked our door." Hannibal leans forward and slides his hands over Will's shoulders pulling their bodies together. "With your permission," Hannibal kisses the side of Will's mouth," I would like to try something different tonight."

Lust hits Will full force, supplanting the worry of William's sleeping habits with delicious thoughts of exploring Hannibal's body. "Different?" He groans as Hannibal pulls his earlobe into his mouth, sucking and nibbling.

"Yes. I would like to fuck your throat."

Will pulls back. "You want to deep throat me?"

"Yes...but first I would like you to do it to me."

Will can see it ; Hannibal staring-up at him, eyes and throat bulging as he jackhammers into that beautiful mouth. "I don't..."

As they've been speaking, Hannibal has been unbuttoning Will's shirt. He pushes it off, mouthing and kissing Will's skin as its exposed. "You're so beautiful my English Rose," he purrs.

A flip is switched in Will's head and he slams into Hannibal, kissing and biting as they tear-off the remainder of his clothing. Hannibal chuckles happily. "A tan suits you, my little stroopwafer."

Will buries his face into Hannibal's neck and leisurely sucks and licks his collarbone. "Not little," he retorts, taking both their erections in hand. "And did you just call me a cookie? Get in the tub!"

Hannibal makes a show of climbing in and slowly sinking into the scented water. The bathtub is enormous, made of the same marble found in the icehouse and encased in black beadboard. Will watches, mesmerized until the other man's words bring him back to attention. "Climb in."

Will hesitates. Hannibal is expecting him to be in front and settle back against his chest; William's words ring in his head. "Scoot forward, I'll be in the back."

Without comment, Hannibal slides forward and Will splashes in behind him.

Hannibal turns to face Will and takes the other man's penis into his hand. "Your position doesn't impact this scenario," he says, and begins to suck and tongue Will's erection as his hands dive underwater to explore his sac.

Will spreads his legs and leans back. "Ahhhh...there...that's so good."

A snore startles William awake. He opens his eyes only to realize the sound came from him.

Shit! I must have fallen asleep. What time is it?

The boy pads over to the mantelpiece clock: 9:37.

It feels way later than that! I can't believe they made me go to bed so early.

William pulls on a pair of shorts and stuffs pillows under the sheet. *No way will this fool anyone...but hopefully I won't get caught.*

The hallway is dark, in spite of the bright moon outside. William wavers in his determination to explore. *Slender Man could be anywhere ... I wouldn't see him coming until his white face shows-up and then...Oh my God...no...he's not real...just go!* He slips out into the passageway and clicks the door shut.

Will arches as Hannibal pushes one finger deep inside him.

After a lifetime of unadventurous female partners, penetrative sex is still relatively new. Hannibal finds his prostrate and Will yelps; it's too much. "Stop...slow down."

Smiling, Hannibal pulls out. "Shall we move to the bed?"

"Yes." Will draws Hannibal to him, and they kiss as they rise dripping from the tub. Will realizes that tasting himself on Hannibal no longer bothers him. In fact, it's sexy as hell. "I can taste myself on you," he murmurs huskily, pulling Hannibal's ass apart and running a finger deep between its warm mounds.

"Will," Hannibal manages to chock-out; it's still mystifies him how susceptible to being overwhelmed he is by Will's love.

"I'm here beloved," Will slots his arm around Hannibal's waist and they help each other out of the bath; Will pulling the larger man. More and more he enjoys dominating during sex, particularly as Hannibal is such a willing partner. He flings Hannibal onto the bed and follows him down, straddling the other man's waist.

"So, you want this?" He teases, wagging his swollen, weeping erection.

Hannibal lies back, glowing with happiness and pleasure. "Yes please."

Will gyrations cease. "Yes, please...what?" His mocking response clearly an impersonation.

"Yes, please... tėtis?" Hannibal falters, playing along.

Will shakes his head. "That's tėvelis to you...naughty boy." He scolds, twisting one of Hannibal's nipples.

Hannibal huffs at the sudden pain, masking his surprise at Will's foray into daddy kink. "Ahhh...no, tėvelis. I've been a very good boy."

Grinning deviantly, Will walks on his knees up the length of Hannibal's body until he is perched over his chest. "Is that so? Well, good boys get tėvelis' special lollipop."

Hannibal's mouth pops open.

Will positions his erection over Hannibal's bottom lip. "Ready?"

Hannibal nods, grasping the back of Will's thighs and relaxes his throat as Wills slides the tip of his penis over his lips and into the soft, hot, wetness of his mouth.

"Ahhh," Will sighs, rolling his shoulders back. "You feel so good....but hold on a moment, let's move."

Will shifts Hannibal until his head is draped-off the side of the bed and his throat pulled taut. "I want to be able to see me in you," he explains and in response to his words, Hannibal's penis jerks; a long, strand of precum dribbles-out. Will licks it clean before repositioning himself at Hannibal's mouth. "Ready?"

"Yes."

"Alright." Will enters Hannibal's mouth once more. "Here," he pushes in half way, "I," he moans and pushes all the way into Hannibal's throat, "come!"

Hannibal closes his eyes and watches as twirling geometric shapes and lights flash behind his lids.

Overwhelmed with sensation, Will is not pulling-out.

Hannibal's throat and body instinctively convulses as he strives to stay alive. Will realizes what's happening and yanks out.

"No!" He lifts Hannibal's head and cradles it in his hands. "Hannibal? Are you alright?"

Hannibal opens his eyes to reassure the other man, though his vision remains blurry. "I'm fine," he croaks. "Try and pull out more frequently."

Will kisses him apologetically." Sorry about that...shall I try again?"

Hannibal nods and lowers his head. Will places one hand on the bed and one hand on Hannibal's neck, watching the smooth brown skin swell and shrink in tandem with his thrusts. The sensations of Hannibal's throat rippling and contracting all around him is unlike anything Will's ever felt and he's reassured by Hannibal's gulping breathes between strokes.

It doesn't take long for his orgasm to build, and he comes, deeply nestled in Hannibal's pharynx. Hannibal's abused throat strains to swallow the load, and Will pulls out sooner than he'd like to help ease his struggle. "Shit, Hannibal!" Will collapses on the bed beside his lover. "That was insane how easily I could have chocked you out! Let me get you some water."

Will climbs off the bed and totters away. When he returns, Hannibal is lounging against the pillows, lazily pulling his foreskin up and down. *Shit he's an anaconda*. "Here, drink this...can you talk?"

Hannibal drains the glass. "Mmmm," he wheezes. "I liked tėvelis' special lollipop."

Shaking from nerves, William slides his hand along the wall of the dark hallway. He bumps into a few things, but fortunately, nothing knocks over.

When he turns a corner, a whisper of light alerts him to the location of the adult's bedroom. As he creeps past, the boy hears rhythmic creaking, and moaning. *Ooookay...so they're busy in there*.

Trying not to think about what he's heard, William forces himself to open every door in the upper level and search the rooms.

Nothing. Not even a hint that Bedelia has been in any of them.

When he comes to the last door at the end, he is sweating and ready to give up. *She's not here...she must already be dead!* He opens the final door and is met with pitch blackness and a gust of hot, musty air.

Fuck! What is this?

Slowly the boy toes his foot forward until it hits wood. Curious, he searches fruitlessly for a light switch, before holding onto the doorjamb with one hand and kicking his leg out as far as he can reach; his foot thumps against wood once more. *I think...I think its stairs! They must go up to the attic; that's why it so hot.*

William drops to his hands and knees to explore. *Yes! They're stairs! Hannibal said the floor was rotten up there. Maybe she's up there and that was a lie to keep me away!*

William crawls backwards to check the dark corridor and freezes.

A shadow at the far end is shifting.

Outside, a man dressed in tactical gear waits for his partner's assessment. "She's alive, but barely. Let's secure the cargo...she can wait."

The man speaks into his headset; both listen intently to the response:
"First floor is secured...splitting-up on the southern and northern stairwells."

"Roger, we're coming-up now."

Darkness can move.

William scrunches down at the frightening thought that Hannibal has discovered he's missing and is hunting him down. A creak of floorboards is all the warning he's given before his mouth is covered and he's hoisted into the air by what feels like a gorilla arm, and pressed against a broad chest. He screams fruitlessly as his head is pressed against ticklish, wiry hair. "Don't scream kid," a man's voice whispers, "we've come to take you home."

Chapter End Notes

William watched the "Hush" episode of Buffy (which was his mom's favorite show)

Any guesses who has come?

Post Toasties

Chapter Summary

Hannibal's love nest is raided.

Chapter Notes

Who loves Halloween? * aggressively raises both hands*
In honor of my fav holiday, I've added a little supernatural element to the story.
I hope you enjoy it :0)

"Mmmm," Hannibal wheezes. "I liked tėvelis' special lollipop."

A ding captures his attention. He plucks his phone from the table and reads the message. Will takes advantage of the temporary lull in the action to refill the glass and use the toilet. By the time he returns, Hannibal is dressed and heading out the door.

"Put these on," he orders, pointing to a pile of clothing, " including the shoes...don't speak, and don't leave this room."

Will is still staring at the pile of clothes in confusion when the lights go out.

*What the...*Will fumbles in the dark and dresses quickly. He's just lacing up his shoes, when the other man returns, looking stern and somber in the moon's glow. "Will?"

Mason has found us."What is it? Is William alright?"

"Yes. Do you trust me?"

The two men stare at one another.

"Yes...I do."

"Good. Then do exactly as I instruct you."

Will shakes his head wonderingly. "Alright...but..."

Hannibal puts his finger to his lips and walks to the far corner of the room. He gestures Will over, and together they slide a table and lamp to one side; Hannibal produces a nail from his

pocket and presses it into an invisible spot in the woodwork. A panel pops open. Hannibal mimes for Will to enter and then follows close behind, pulling the lamp and table back to their original spots.

Then Will hears them.

The low, rumble of engines.

Hannibal pulls the panel home.

Standing in the blackness of the hidden passage Will's mind reels; warm, strong, hands presses against his back. *Hannibal is here with me...no matter what happens...we'll be okay.*

"Everything is going to be fine, Will." Hannibal's voice is low and serene. "Remember that at all times we must be completely silent, and no movement of any kind without my signal."

Will hums his agreement. "William..."

"Will be fine. If they attempt to hurt him, they will die."

Will experiences the same sense of heightened awareness he'd felt when they hunted and murdered Claus; one which he's come to recognize as pure, unadulterated, Hannibal.

"Yes," he whispers, his nerves sizzling; simultaneously exhilarated and calm. He realizes he is grinning.

Hannibal chuckles. "Tonight you will see blood in moonlight...and then you shall tell me whether it is not one of the most beautiful sights you have ever seen."

William's captor's reassurances do little to assuage the boy's panic. He writhes like an eel as his wrists and ankles are secured with zip lines. As he struggles, he's aware that other figures have joined them in the dark; standing in a silent a semi-circle. *They're going to kill me.*

The thought loosens the boy's bladder; hot urine floods down the front of his shorts and splashes onto the floor.

From the top of the attic stairs, Hannibal squeezes Will's hand once; stand down.

"Fuck," the unseen intruder has noticed William's incontinence. "He's pissing himself...hand me some tape."

Trussed, and drenched from the waist down, William's mouth is secured with a piece of tape. He begins to hyperventilate.

"He may not make it," William hears one man say over the roaring in his ears as he's carried through the darkness.

"That's fine...he's not the one that matters," is the last thing the boy hears before everything fades away.

Two shadows, darker than the rest, dissolve into the attic walls.

The intruders have repaired the tampered fuse box, explored a system of inner passages, but have yet to locate the fugitives. They rendezvous in the downstairs entrance hall to map-out their next move.

William, laid-out on the sofa, has retreated into his mind. Bedelia, still unconscious, occupies the couch opposite.

"Ideas?"

"Torch the place...they're still here...flush 'em out."

"Negative," another man argues," they're gone...let's take the civvies and leave."

"We don't get fucking paid without Lecter and Graham," the leader protests.

"Exactly!" The first man says. "Tuck these two in bed, burn this mofo, if they're anywhere close by, they'll come back."

The leader shakes his head. "The female was a prisoner; they'd let her fry...but the boy." He looks regretfully over his shoulder; he has a son not much older than the one staring into nothingness. *Sorry kid.*

Six feet away, behind a painting, Hannibal tugs Will's hand twice; Will returns the signal.

"All agreed?" The leader's men all nod. "That's a go then...update?"

"Jacobs says he's got nothing...they got a drop on us somehow."

"Fuck!" *There goes my college fund.* "Okay, take 'em up to bed...but whoever has the kid...take care of him before you leave...I don't want a Post Toastie on my conscience."

His subordinates exchange glances; for the first time, their leader tastes mutiny in the air.

"Jesus! How many kids did you kill in Kunar?! Fucking no nads boots?! Elder, Cohen; go cover the outside and tell Jacobs to send half his guys over. Groves...take the woman, I'll get the kid."

Silently, the men carry their burdens upstairs.

"Just put her in the fags' bed," the leader orders as he enters William's room. He settles the child onto the bed and cuts his bindings.

"Shhh..." he consoles the boy, though William is unresponsive to outside stimuli. "Don't be afraid." The man covers the child with the bedclothes before removing his pistol from its holster. "It'll all be over soon."

CRACK

The leader slumps as his neck is snapped. Will drags the still living man to the wall and Hannibal pulls them both inside.

"Sir?"

The subordinate is at the room's entrance. He glances in, sees the child motionless under the covers and speaks into his headset. "Female is in place...juvenile male is in place...I'm descending to the ground floor now."

The young man stares in disbelief as his intestines fill his hands. *How am I still alive to see this?*

Hannibal Lecter wipes his soiled hands on a brocade cushion and purses his lips. "What was your superior's colorful term? A 'Post Toastie?" He grins at a curly-headed man carrying the boy.

Will Graham smiles gleefully at the eviscerated man. "They're tastier because they're toastier!" He crows, handing Hannibal a remote control.

The two men walk out of the marble entryway, shoulder to shoulder.

A handful of moments tick by in the still house; the smell of blood and entrails polluting the beautifully appointed room. The man can no longer feel his body; he closes his eyes and waits.

A sibilant whisper, close at hand makes him open them again.

A group of people, men, women, and children, have somehow entered the house without his noticing and stand, encircling him. More than he can count, they fan out in all directions. He stares at them in horror.

"The devil's home is going the way of it's master."

The speaker, a woman, dressed in the fashion of a bygone era, smiles around at the silent crowd before kissing the two babes nestled in her arms; five more children, all toddlers, clutch at her long skirts.

Tears fill the man's eyes. *I'm sorry.*

The phantoms, for the man sees now that they are translucent, begin to speak, until he wishes he had the strength to cover his ears; a Babel of dialects, screams and clapping. Many of them stomp their feet, singing and raising their hands in thanksgiving. Others hug and kiss. Nearly all shed copious tears, sparkling silver in the low light of the crystal chandeliers.

A mile away, Hannibal flips two switches.

Deep in the bowels of the sugar baron's plantation, five bombs detonate and the man is flung twenty feet into the air. The last thing he sees before dying is the sweetly smiling face of a fresco's cupid.

He is dead before he hits the ground.

The specters stream upwards in a glittering, icy mist; up through the flames and smoke, up through the shattered masterpieces of a race of men whose arrogance and hubris denied themselves and countless others their humanity.

The souls of five thousand men, women, and children, laugh, weep, and rejoice, brought together for one glorious moment, before fading once more, into the warm Caribbean night.

Blown free from the front steps, Bedelia is pelted by burning debris. The mansion, desiccated as ancient bones is already an inferno; hot enough to blister skin. She manages to crawl another twenty feet before lapsing once more into unconsciousness.

The leader's support group arrives just in time to see the roof collapse.

Without fire proximity suits, their plan to search the house is aborted. After thoroughly combing the area, the only evidence of their comrades are pools of evaporated blood; they find no bodies, just Bedelia, clinging to life.

"Fuck!" Jacobs turns to his men. "Take her... I'm calling it...9:52... Brennan, Groves, Elder, Cohen; MIA and presumed dead."

The men and their prisoner are long gone by the time the fire brigade arrives.

Cordell picks-up the phone in Mason's office. His hog-like face stiffens when he hears the voice on the other end's report.

"Well...that is very disappointing. Expect a call from Mr. Verger shortly." He hangs-up the phone. *This is bad. Very, very bad.*

Cordell is in the process of mixing a fresh martini to accompany his bad news when the house phone rings again.

"Yes!? What is it!?"

"Hello Cordell."

Cordell rechecks the number. "I knew it! Those idiots said you were dead! You have Lecter and Graham?"

"In a manner of speaking."

Cordell intestines clench. "Brennan?"

"No, not Brennan...Cordell? Could you please block-out Mr. Verger's afternoons for the next few months? You see, we're not quite sure when we'll be stateside, but when we are, we would appreciate his undivided attention."

Cordell's throat works, but produces no words.

The unknown voice chuckles knowingly. "And we would hope to see you there as well. You're more than welcome to attend...in fact, I think we must insist."

Cordell swallows. "Mr. Verger is dead."

Will Graham laughs. "Is that so? I'm sorry to hear that...then we must come to pay our respects."

"I don't...hello? Hello?"

Will hands Hannibal the phone. "Mason is dead," he says, eyes twinkling.

"Is he now?"

Tutting sympathetically, Hannibal runs his hand over the head of the child sleeping in Will's arms. "Well, well. I have just the florist; a true maestro of the funereal wreath...and I know the perfect spot upon which to lay it."

" Muskrat Farms during wintertime?" Will grins doubtfully. "Brrrr! What about my tan?"

Hannibal rests his head on Will's shoulder before pressing a kiss to William's head. "Springtime then?" He asks, settling down against Will's warm neck. Both men gaze contentedly at the boy's sleeping face.

"Springtime," Will agrees with a quick kiss to Hannibal's ear. " Sounds perfect."

Kleinmaus

Chapter Summary

The Lecter household welcomes a visitor.

Chapter Notes

Eeek!
This election has been distracting me from writing...my apologies to any reader who has been waiting to see what happened with this.

Please leave me a comment if you'd like me to continue writing ...

Thanks and stay safe.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Consciousness creeps slowly.

Like a sleepwalker, William watches carnage unfold around him.

Men are killed and maimed. The stink of gunpowder fills his nose and mouth, screams, and oaths fade in and out.

Safe in his father's arms William watches it all through blank eyes.

He sees, without comprehension when Bedelia is laid alongside an outer balustrade. Low rumbles fill his ear; Will and Hannibal are speaking.

He closes his eyes and sinks into the velvety well of shock.

Local constabulary is still sifting through the smoking remains of the plantation when two men and a child disembark from a helicopter.

Will takes a moment to appreciate his surroundings; golden-brown rolling hills tinged here and there with the green of new growth, gnarled oaks, a glimpse of distant fields, now fallow,

all under a dome of pure, robins egg blue. He grins over the boy's head; Hannibal returns it happily, appreciative of how the wind pinkens his lover's complexion.

He feels like a young man again.

Anything is possible

"But why is it so loud though?"

William is standing at a window. The floor to ceiling shutters rattle against the onslaught of a particularly forceful blast. Hearing no reply, he turns to see Hannibal set a steaming casserole onto the farm table; Will is hard by, slicing a baguette.

"The Mistral?" Hannibal pours a glass of wine and takes a sip; delicious. "It's a strong wind created when high and low pressure areas converge...have you washed your hands?"

In the two odd months he has lived with Hannibal, William has yet to accept all the unnecessary washing, combing, and tidying his new parent demands. "Yeeees," the boy grouses.

"Good, then you may bring the salad."

William carries the salad bowl to the table. "Why do we eat the salad at the end?" *And cheese for desert? Yuck!*

Hannibal ignores the child's complaints; he has learned that paying attention to the majority of the boy's utterances is superfluous. Hannibal takes another sip, feeling sudden irritation at the youngster's appearance. Though William has proved adept at languages, he has remained intrepidly proletariat in his choices of dress and grooming.

Choosing to ignore the brewing squabble, Will places the bread on the table and everyone takes a seat. As is his habit, William zones-out during Hannibal's explanation of the meal while Will hums appreciatively. "Everything looks delicious."

"Thank you, bon appetite."

For a few moments, no one speaks. The wind howls, the fire crackles, and the clink of cutlery on china are the only sounds.

When Will eventually looks up, he watches as his son listlessly spoons stew into his mouth; chunks of untouched meat have been pushed to one side.

The familiar ache returns.

Since the night of the raid, William has shown symptoms of regression; bedwetting, thumb sucking, selective mutism. All behaviors expected after a trauma. But as days turn into weeks Will unease mounts.

Hannibal remains unconcerned.

"All natural and normal," he assures his lover each time Will broaches the topic. "He is stronger than you give him credit...but I will speak with him again."

The days following Hannibal's sessions with William, the boy's self-soothing behaviors appear to diminish. But Will knows better; William has become more adept at hiding his neuroses. *Hannibal must know William's still suffering...why is he refuting the evidence of his own eyes?*

Then one morning, William goes missing.

"William?" Will calls as he walks from room to room. *Wait*! *He's probably just hiding in the loft...no...not here either...where the hell is he?*

Will is heading-out to search outside when Hannibal catches his arm.

"Come with me." He leads Will straight to the boy's closet and pulls it open.

There, curled-up in a nest of clothes is William, fast asleep. "Ach, du kleine Maus," Hannibal had whispered, and the nickname had stuck, much to the boy's disgust.

"Kleinmaus," Hannibal smiles, recalling that image, "I'd like you to try the meat tonight."

William stares down at his bowl. "I already did."

Rather than contradict a clear falsehood, Hannibal tries another tack. "Eat one piece of meat and I will take you hunting."

Both Will and William look up from their meals.

"Really?"

"I don't think..."

"Daaad! I know how to shoot a gun! " William stops, his eyes swinging towards the household's ultimate authority.

Amused, Hannibal takes a bite of bread. "I well remember...still, there's always room for improvement."

William checks his father. *Yup, he's bugging out...probably thinks I'll shoot myself.* The boy rolls his eyes in scorn.

Hannibal places his hand over Will's. "Bolt action, very little recoil."

Will shakes his head. "I don't..."

A knock on the heavy door stops him.

Alarmed, he pushes away from the table. Hannibal wipes his mouth and smiles approvingly at William; the child is busy secreting a knife in his sleeve. He lowers his voice. "Though I approve your proactiveness, Kleinmaus," he murmurs so Will can't hear," that won't be necessary." He raises his voice and looks around at the attentive faces. "William's instructor has arrived."

Will watches the strange woman deep in conversation with his son; what's more astonishing is that the boy is conversing back. Hannibal comes to stand beside him, wine glass in hand.

"Chiyoh is an old friend, I trust her implicitly."

Too bad she detests me then. Jealousy? "Yes, I can see that." *No...more of a guarded protectiveness*." But why is she here?"

Hannibal sets a hand on Will's shoulder. "I felt it was time..."

Will feels a familiar chill, one whose origin is varied and complex. "For?"

"Alone time, just the two of us."

Will's heart leaps. "He's going back with her?"

Hannibal eyes him curiously. "No...but Chiyoh has...qualities which I believe William can benefit from."

Will feels his face grow taut. "I see...will she be sharing those...'qualities'... here, or elsewhere?"

Hannibal laughs appreciatively. *I do so love you Will*. "London was my initial thought."

"Land of my forefathers, " Will spits-out.

Not for the first time, Hannibal feels a tingle of uncertainly at Will's behavior.

Why the topic of William continues to produce these levels of suppressed rage in the man is a conundrum requiring closer examination. *Unresolved guilt alone seems unlikely... even for Will.* "Exactly so...though there are other options if you prefer...my own ancestral home comes readily to mind."

"Lecter Manor!?" Will's tone is supercilious.

Hannibal inclines his head modestly before offering a gentle correction. "Lecter Dvaras... if we are splitting hairs...Chiyoh maintains her residence there."

In the front room, Chiyoh and William's heads are bent over a sketchbook; the one which the child has stubbornly declared as "off limits to adults." Will's eyes narrow. "That sounds... intriguing... I would like to see that."

"I would be honored to show it to you," Hannibal nods, turning to see what is agitating Will so. "They get on well together," he says, half-turning to observe Will's affect. "I'm glad." When Will does not reply, he returns his full attention back to the scene and takes a mental picture; a delicately beautiful young woman and a boy, features indistinct in the low, dappled light, oblivious to anything other than the drawing tablet between them.

Jealous suspiciousness is added to Will's emotional strata. "Yes...yes they do."

Chiyoh had been surprised by Hannibal's request.

It had been more than three years since their last conversation, six months since his last text, though money continues to be deposited regularly for the maintenance of his property and staff.

Over the years, she had followed the peaks and valleys of Hannibal's American life with amusement, concern, and ultimately incredulity. His association with the FBI agent Will Graham she disapproves of as an exceptionally bizarre choice for companionship.

It isn't jealously, she concludes as she prepares for departure, *though it's true he was the center of my world when I was a young girl. No*, she thinks, buttoning her overcoat before an antique mirror, *Graham is not simply a competitor...he is more dangerous than that.* The woman rotely tidies a strand of hair as she studies her reflection. *Will Graham is Hannibal's Achilles heel ... his Deus ex Machina*. A slight frown creases her brow as she picks-up her valise and rifle case.

Will Graham is...The Enemy.

"I like how you have shaded this here." Why Hannibal had not informed her there was a child living with him is unclear. *Perhaps because he is the offspring of The Enemy?*
She hypothesizes, as introductions are made.

The boy, a twin of his father, is young, ten or eleven, and 'off' in that way only another child born and raised under traumatic circumstances can recognize. *Damaged... I wonder what it is I am here for? Did he think I could help?*

William makes a noncommittal noise at the compliment and turns a few pages, pausing when he comes to a carefully drawn sketch.

Chiyoh stirs uncomfortably at the title. "She is very pretty...your mama." Her voice is slow and measured; William likes how it sounds. He stares down at the drawing.

"This isn't really her," he admits in a hard voice. "That's an actress I copied off the internet...cuz everyone said she looked like her...I can't remember her face...not anymore." He

violently rips the page from the book, throws it to the floor, and tosses the book onto the couch. "Let's go outside."

Chiyoh raises her brows. *A command? Hannibal encourages this?* She consults her host; Hannibal nods.

William is already at the door waiting.

"Alright... let me get my coat."

The Enemy, who has been sourly watching them this whole time, turns away.

Chiyoh and the boy slip outside into the dark, blustery night.

Bedelia's eyelids flutter, but the effort to open them proves too great.

"She's waking-up."

"I'll let Mr. Verger know."

Verger...Verger...

Behind closed eyes, Bedelia struggles to recall the portent behind of that name. When she finally makes the connection, she pries open her lids, gummy and crusted, only to quickly close them again. She groans and stirs; her body feels heavy, disconnected.

A cool, soft, hand smoothes across her forehead.

"Shhh...try and stay still." A woman's voice, soft, gentle...kind.

Bedelia peers once more through her eyelashes and examines the person above her; young, pale, Madonna-like with her sad, wistful face, and dark hair. Bedelia experimentally turns her aching head and hisses with pain.

The young woman tuts. "See? Just stay quiet, Dr. Du Maurier, " her voice is as gentle as her hand, but edged in steel." My name is Margot Verger, and I'm going to get you out of here."

Chapter End Notes

So I'm the first to admit the way I've written Chiyoh might be off- bordering on OOC.
This character and her timeline confused me when I watched the show.
if anyone has insight into her or her relationship with Hannibal I'd appreciate the info!

Shadows On The Walls

Chapter Summary

Quality family time- Hannibal style.

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year!

Chiyoh follows the boy down a gravel courtyard through a wind brutal in its intensity. Their way is dark but she has no trouble seeing; Hannibal always said she was more feline than human.

Her ears are already throbbing when they reach their destination; a stone barn with ten foot high oak doors. Wordlessly, she helps the boy open, then close, the massive panels. The sudden quiet and warmth is heavenly. Chiyoh removes her gloves and rubs her ears as she scans the interior. William's ears and face are bright pink, but he seems unaffected. *So like a child.*

"You come here often? To be by yourself and think?" William doesn't reply. He's standing before a low, sturdy, kitchen table, his demeanor a mixture of fear and confusion. "You saw something happen here? Something which frightened you?" She walks to the opposite side of the table and studies him.

The Enemy's son nods and slides his palms along the scarred surface. "Why do you hate my dad?" Asked with mild curiosity rather than disapproval.

"I don't...I don't even know your father."

The child humphs and looks up into her face; now she is the one being studied. "How old are you?"

"A gentleman never asks... and a lady never tells...how old are you?" *Nine...ten?*

"Eleven...my mom was a lady... and she told people how old she was." William moves a finger along a deep grove in the wood. Chiyoh can only imagine the force it would have taken to make such a mark. "You can tell me, I know how to keep secrets." William's tone is coy and teasing, his expression innocence itself.

Unnatural boy. Chiyoh forces herself to laugh."And what secrets would you ask of me...young master?"

William isn't offended by the woman's sarcasm or defensiveness, his empathy has already provided him with more than enough information. He shrugs. "You love Hannibal...and you hate my dad cuz you're jealous. You would hurt dad if you thought you could get away with it... but you won't...because you know Hannibal would kill you."

Chiyoh keeps her face placid as the child stares up at her. "That is an untrue and rather nasty tale you have invented. Perhaps I should warn Dr. Lecter...let him know what sort of boy he has living with him."

William narrows his eyes then grins derisively. "Too late lady...he already knows."

"Dr. Du Maurier! It's a pleasure to finally meet you."

Roused from a drug-induced sleep, Bedelia starts awake, heart pounding. She's in a hospital bed, secured by cloth straps, and hooked to multiple I.Vs. She vaguely remembers speaking to a young woman, a young woman who is no longer in the room. *Did I dream her?*

A wheel-chaired figure is parked beside her bed. If the mask designed to obscure the occupant's face is representational, it's a young man. The querulous voice pipes up once more. "Forgive me...Cordell!" A man dressed in medical white pushes the hinged mask to one side.

Oh my....that is something you don't see every day. Bedelia is too compromised by drugs for suavity. She scans the reconstructed face with interest.

The man laughs; a high, cracked whinny. "Well? Do you think you can you help me doc?"

Confused, Bedelia blinks and sluggishly tests her limbs. "I'm not a plastic surgeon Mr...and why am I strapped to this bed?"

"Verger...Mason Verger. And Cordell thought it in your own best interest."

Verger. Bedelia's mind spins when it makes a connection. *The one injured by his own livestock?*

"Dr... Bedelia... Du Maurier." The reedy voice sounds entranced and Bedelia's heart rate monitor blips merrily. "I never in a million years thought I would be so fortunate as to meet Dr. Lecter's own, personal, therapist." Bright blue eyes glitter and snap. "Though I suppose I'm a living testament of your abysmal failure to your profession. Am I right in assuming your license has been revoked?"

I am so fucked. "Is Dr. Lecter here as well?"

"Cordell, you may leave now." Mason waits until the door clicks shut. "We're still looking for him, but we have Murder Wifey..and Junior of course."

Without a face to study, Bedelia can't be certain of the man's truthfulness, but her body responds with a sudden, intense headache. *Shit...this is a terrible time for a migraine.* She closes her eyes to map-out her words. "I may have served as Hannibal's therapist," she opens her eyes defiantly, "but that doesn't mean I owe him any loyalty...quite the opposite in fact. Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham are no friends of mine."

"You mentioned something about instruction?"

Hannibal hands Will a stack of plates, pleased when the man automatically begins to rinse them.

"I did. Among her many accomplishments, Chiyoh is a fine marksperson. William will learn much from her."

"And this is in lieu of returning to the States?"

"Unless you would like him to accompany us?"

Will freezes. Hannibal leans across and turns off the water. He presses himself against Will's side, rubbing their cheeks together. "He's already seen us."

Will stiffens, begins to pull away, then changes his mind. He turns into the half embrace and rests his head on Hannibal's shoulder. "He's seen you...not me."

Hannibal runs his warm palms up the inside of Will's shirt and feels a gratifying shudder run through the other man. Kissing Will's ear, he runs his nose down and along the delicate jaw line. Will presses closer, already half hard. "Here, Will," Hannibal murmurs, "he saw us here." As he speaks, Hannibal tightens his hold, anticipating a fight or flight response. Predictably, Will yanks backwards. *Like a fish on a line.*

"How!?"

"He was hiding in the barn."

"You said he was in bed!"

"I was wrong."

You were lying. "When did you find out?"

Hannibal strokes the back of Will's head as he considers whether to tell the whole truth. *Better not, the boy is still his weak spot.* "He told me."

Will wrenches out of Hannibal's embrace, Hannibal holds his hands up appeasingly. "Are you going to hurt me Will?"

Will looks down to where Hannibal's gaze has dropped and quickly unclenches his fists. "This is not okay Hannibal."

"Normally, I would agree...but taking his previous...experiences... into account, speaking openly... as a family... should provide him with the support and security he needs."

"Cats out of the bag." Will says ruefully and shivers; a metal wall scone has given Hannibal's shadow whimsically twisted horns.

Hannibal smiles and walks up, staring at the man's castdown head. *My beautiful Will*. "Cats out of the bag." He agrees, gently lifting the other man's face to his own. His lover's large eyes are a ragbag of blues, greens, and grays. *Breathtaking.* "Do you trust me?"

The colors in Will's eyes constrict and expand. "I'm afraid."

"I'm here." Hannibal promises, stroking and kissing his lover's soft cheek. The wind outside lulls and he hears the sound of crunching gravel. "No matter what...I will always be here for you."

Hannibal pulls Will into his arms and his embrace is immediately reciprocated. Curious, Will checks their shadows; now it is he who sports the horns. *God...what am I going to do?*

Family Meeting

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal hold a family meeting and a new/old character is introduced.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"William? Come here, katinėlis, sit beside us...you may go out later."

William pauses by the door and looks over. His father and Hannibal are seated on the couch by the fire. Chiyoh, he was informed at breakfast, was gone but would return later that afternoon.

The boy turns away from the door and shuffles into the salon, stopping behind an armchair. "What?" *Fuck! I bet she told him what I said...snitch!*

"Come here Kleinmaus, you're not in trouble...we would like to hold a family meeting."

William stares at Hannibal for a moment then hops onto the armchair and primly folds his hands.

"Here, Kleinmaus," Hannibal holds out a hand, "we want you here, between us. "

Will smiles reassuringly. "Come on buddy, we just want to talk with you."

Hannibal pats the cushion between the two men. "Come closer, all the better to hear one another."

Closer gingerbread boy, the fox purred, I can't quite hear you. "I can hear you here just fine."

"If you're concerned about what you told Chiyoh in the barn last night," Hannibal begins and Will looks at him in surprise, " don't be...now, for the last time, please come here."

Oh shit. William walks over and sits down; Hannibal pats the boy's head approvingly then slides his hand down the child's back, a warm pressure against William's spine. "Thank you."

"What *did* you tell Chiyoh in the barn?" Will demands.

William shrugs, and stares down at the rug. Hannibal grins at Will over the child's head. "That she was jealous, and would kill you if she wasn't convinced of a certain and terrible retribution."

Will shakes his head disapprovingly. "William..."

"Yeah, yeah, you were thinking the same thing...don't pretend that you weren't."

Hannibal's hand tightens on the boy's scruff. " No need to be rude to your father young man."

William squirms out from under Hannibal's hand. "It's true though! You even said its true!"

Hannibal smiles then chuckles at Will's expression. "It's only the truth my love, " he takes one of Will's hands and caresses it with his thumb. "No need to be so upset by the truth."

William makes a face and presses himself back against the couch cushions. "If you're going to start making-out, can I go now?"

"Ne, ne," Hannibal laughs, kissing Will's hand and releasing it," we haven't had our family meeting yet...right tėtis?"

Will shakes his head bashfully. "Right...and I'd like to go first."

"Ugggg," William groans and crosses his arms.

"William...we know you were hiding in the barn the other night."

Hannibal watches a flush spread up the boy's neck. William says nothing but brings his knees up to his chest. Will gently lays a hand on his son's leg. "What did you see?"

William softly bites on his own tongue a few times then rests his chin on his knees. "You."

"Me?" *So Hannibal was right...smug cock*.

"Mmhmm."

"And what was I doing?"

"Biting pieces out of a man." Will blanches."But the man couldn't scream anymore cuz tėtis had done something to him...something inside his throat." The boy hugs his legs harder. That moment had been horrible; when the man realized he could no longer beg, or scream, could no longer make utterances of any kind. That look of frantic despair still haunts the child's dreams.

Will stares at his hand resting on William's leg and slowly retracts it, digesting what he has just heard. Though he's getting better, he still doesn't have Hannibal's perfect control or recall during his own bouts of bloodlust. *Just bits and pieces...so to speak*. Will almost laughs aloud at his own pun.

"That must have been a frightening thing for you to experience," Hannibal says, taking up the narrative. "Is that why you hid in the closet?"

"Mmhmm." *But that's not the only reason*.

"Well, I'm proud of you for telling the truth...and I'm also proud of your father for what he did that night..and you should be as well."

"Hmmm." William grunts. Hannibal encircles the boy's shoulders with one arm and leans him backwards in the crook of his arm. William *eeps* with alarm, though Hannibal is not angry, just grave; the boy's eyes dart around the man's face.

"Your father did a brave thing, ožiukas, killing that man."

William looks over at Will then drops his gaze. "What did you do to him?"

Hannibal knows exactly what the child is referencing. "I cut his vocal chords...snip, snip," he jokes, tucking an errant curl behind the boy's ear.

Will leans forward, he has skin in this game and its time he acted like it. He taps the boy's knee and William raises troubled eyes to him. "That man was barely a person, William. He needed to be put down, just like any vicious animal."

"Why couldn't you just shoot him?"

"Because this way is more enjoyable." Hannibal's declaration holds an echo of laughter; William feels his of pleasure. "You liked biting chunks out of him?" He demands of his father, queasily. "Chewing bloody, raw skin and swallowing it?!"

Hannibal's brows rise, his smile, encouraging. *Tell him the truth.*

Will meets his son's gaze, abashed. "I did...I do." He takes a breath, drawing strength from Hannibal's calm. "We both do when we kill pigs."

Pigs? William swallows. Though he had spoken about this with Hannibal, hearing it from his father was harder, more unnatural.

Hannibal smells the tang of bile, hints of lime and turmeric. "Well...sometimes they're sheep!"

Will laughs and rolls his eyes at Hannibal's silliness, encouraging William to smile back. He doesn't.

"I don't want...I don't want to do what you do."

"How do you know...unless you try?" Hannibal smacks Will's thigh. "Remember Jack? Remember *Frederick* at my dinner parties?"

Will grins, eyes bright. "That's right William! Those two could *mangiare come un maiale* with the best of them. We all did...never hurt us a bit!"

"You guys didn't know what you were eating!"

Will is suddenly serious. "I did."

William winces and shakes his head with disbelief.

"It's true. And you know what? It was okay...because tėtis taught me that when you spend time and effort preparing a beautiful, delicious meal, you are creating something wonderful to share with your family and friends." Will's whole being shines with love and admiration during his speech.

William squints up at Hannibal who nods in agreement. "Your father is exactly right...killing someone who is little better than a pig," his voice rises, warming to his topic," using those raw materials to create culinary art, " he smiles beatifically," is magical! Who does it hurt?!"

Hannibal cocks his head, waiting for an answer.

"Ummm...the person you killed?"

"Animals are killed for meat all over the world."

"People aren't animals...I mean, yes, we are animals, but people don't eat people. It's gross...its cannibalism."

"Cannibalism is rife in the natural world," Hannibal says, absently twisting one of the child's curls around his finger. "What we do is sport, like hunters, then we turn our catch into something essential. Food is life. "

William turns accusing eyes to his father. "You were killing people the whole time you worked for the FBI?!" *Mom would be freaking out right now!*

"No," Will admits," not the whole time."

"Oh...so only with Hannibal?"

"Only with Hannibal."

"And now you like doing it...killing and eating people?"

Will nods. "We don't kill just to kill William, we don't kill indiscriminately...but yes, when we have chosen our target and have begun the hunt...it's exciting... exhilarating. I feel...powerful, in control. Yes, I do enjoy it."

Hannibal beams with pride. *My beautiful Will... magnificent.*

William looks up to Hannibal for confirmation and the man smiles so warmly, it reaches his eyes. "Don't worries about us Kleinmaus, your papas will always love and protect you. And in turn, "he becomes serious," you must respect how our family operates and keep our secrets."

William looks away; the fire is mostly embers now. "The fire needs another log."

Hannibal loosens his hold; they have made their point, and the boy has absorbed it, some deflection is permitted. "Go on then, put on another one."

William gladly springs-up from the couch and examines the wood basket. "This one good?" He asks, holding up his selection.

"Perfect," Hannibal and Will agree. William carefully places the log then returns to his spot. They all silently watch the flames, each busy with his own thoughts.

"You see? It's caught and burning nicely," Hannibal praises, resting his head against the boy's shoulder and shooting Will a meaningful glance. "So, Kleinmaus, will you give us your solemn promise? To protect our secret and our family?"

What choice do I have? "Fine."

"Fine?"

"Fine...I promise to protect our secret..."

"And our family," Hannibal prompts, watching Will watch his son.

"And our family," William parrots and turns to his father. "But I still don't want to eat them...the pigs I mean."

I pray that you never will. "I understand, we both do." Will nods. "But I think, eventually, over time, you will change your mind."

"Hmmm...gross."

Will and Hannibal laugh and William allows a tiny grin to escape.

"So! Kleinmaus! Chiyoh should be back in a few hours for your lesson but I think kitting you up now is in order."

William is instantly suspicious. "Lesson?"

Hannibal stands and clasps his hands. "Yes, lessons! How would you like to learn how to snipe?"

"Snipe? Like taking someone out with a rife?"

"Yes, training to become a sniper."

"Yeah! Snipers are cool!"

Hannibal leaves and comes back with a rifle case which he sets on the table. "This is yours," he says, opening the box. William reverently runs a finger along gleaming metal. "Chiyoh will teach you...and when you have mastered the skill, for which I believe you already have a natural ability, you shall amaze us with your talent!"

William examines the scope. "Shooting paper targets? Like the ones cops use?"

"Perhaps...or perhaps something more exciting and less prosaic than a target."

"I bet you mean a person, don't you!?"

"Perhaps..." Hannibal checks Will who is taking the news more gracefully than expected. "Would you like that?"

"I don't know...it depends who it would be...a pig?" William imagines a figure walking into his crosshairs, taking a breath, holding it, squeezing the trigger. *Shit! He's really going to let me kill someone!*

"I can't promise you this with any certainty...but how does...Mr...Mason...Verger sound?"

In a musty room, smelling of sweat and rat droppings, Dolarhyde touches the bruises on his face, hissing with pain. The Dragon had been cruel tonight; his words and commands obliterating any peace and content the man had carried home with him after a productive day's work.

He knows The Voice is right; he is weak, and spineless, and ugly. As he limps down the stairs, he prays once more to be granted the opportunity to prove his worth. To prove he has the discipline and capacity deserving of transformation.

Slowly, every muscle and sinew aching, he lowers himself onto the sofa and pushes the remote's play button. He leans back, pushes down his briefs and grasps his half-hard penis. *Is it safe? Will the Dragon allow this?* Dolarhyde turns his face towards the attic, listening intently. But no voice, harsh and imperious is heard, just soft laughter coming from the glowing TV.

"Thank you...thank you...I won't let you down."

It doesn't take long, just a few strong pulls before his ejaculate is pulsing into his hand. The woman on the screen smiles with approval, pushing her breasts toward him; inviting him to take, to enjoy, to absorb.

He turns off the set, cleans-up, and goes to bed. *Work tomorrow. Those scumbags have no idea who and what they're dealing with.* He punches his pillow and settles himself, hoping tonight will be a good one; free of racing thoughts and feverish dreams.

Two more weeks...and then the Dragon will unfurl his wings and show them His power.

That night, he dreams of flying.

Chapter End Notes

so old school video for the Dragon but in my mind he is Richard...yum.

A Red Handprint

Chapter Summary

William is shown a monster from Hannibal's past and Will and Hannibal have wall-sex.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"And these are your rooms."

Hannibal opens a door and waits as William reluctantly walks inside. *Bet he's gonna lock me in!* "Nice!" The child says quickly before hurrying back out into the hallway. "Where's your guys' room?"

"In another wing." Hannibal purposely jingles the set of antique keys eye level to the boy; teasing Will Graham's son is too tempting. "Wouldn't you like to go back inside and look around?"

I'm not falling for that! William is unaware of the scowl on his face; Hannibal's cheeky grin grows larger. "Another wing?" *What even does that mean?*

"Yes." Hannibal says without further elaboration. "And I'd like you to play," Hannibal's mouth quirks at the boy's deepening frown, "or explore quietly by yourself until dinner time. Do you think you can find your own way to the kitchen in three hours?"

"Uh huh...can I go anywhere?"

"Yes you may. The majority of the rooms are locked, so if you find an open one, permission to enter is implied. Were you planning on going outside at all?"

Hannibal's demeanor has changed from playful to steely and William feels both fearful and restless. "I don't know, it's kinda cold and rainy. Why? Is there something cool out there?"

Hannibal laughs. "Why don't you put on your coat and hat and see for yourself? Ah...here's your father now..."

William glances down the corridor, sure enough Will is at the far end, suitcases in hand.

"Hey William!" He calls cheerily. Even from this distance he can tell his son is upset. *What has Hannibal done now?!* "Isn't this great? How do you like your room?" He goes inside,

whistling as he sets William's cases onto the bed. "Wow! William!? Isn't this great? Much better than my little shack! "

"I liked your shack." William mumbles under his breath then plasters a fake, enthusiastic smile on his face. "Yippiee! Jeepers it's great! " Will and Hannibal share a look and William's mood sinks further; he wishes he could talk to his dad privately, but since their talk on the beach, Hannibal has insured they are never alone together. "Can I see your room now?"

Will looks abashed. "If you'd like to...not really sure where it is yet..."

Hannibal encircles Will's waist with his arm. "Bring your coat and hat, katinėlis, we'll all go together."

William grabs his warm clothing but doesn't take Hannibal's outstretched hand. Instead, he walks around and sneaks his hand into Will's. Happily surprised, Will squeezes the small, cold hand, trying to capture the boy's attention, but William is staring stonily ahead. *Oh boy...it's going to be one of those days. Poor little guy.*

"All set then? Good!" Arm still wrapped around Will's waist, Hannibal strides down the hallway forcing William to trot in order to keep-up. *Hannibal's jealous!* The realization sends a thrill of power through him though he keeps his face expressionless. *That's why he won't let us be alone together*!

Hannibal has reached a set of stairs and is practically vaulting down them; William clings to his father to keep from falling. *He's jealous of me!! Liar! He's not like a dad! We're not a real family!*

"What's the hurry? Will asks lightly, he's picked-up on Hannibal's strange behavior as well. Instantly, his lover slackens his pace.

"No hurry!" Hannibal chuckles, giving Will a quick peck. He catches William staring at them; the child looks away. *That's right ožiukas...know your place and we will not have any problems*.

"Are we nearly there?" Will is short of breath and William is openly panting.

"Yes." Hannibal stops before a double door. "William, could you remain here please while I show your father our suite?"

"Is that really..."

"Will? William understands the necessity of a couple's alone time...don't you William?"

William shrugs. "You've told me like a million times!"

Hannibal takes Will's hands in his. "There you are...he's fine. Will, come inside. William? You may go explore now." And with that, Hannibal pulls Will into the room and closes the door in William's face.

Embarrassed, the boy is already walking away when he hears the snick of a key and the thud of a body hitting the door.

Gross...guess I'll go outside then.

"Han-" Will groans as Hannibal pushes him against the door and covers his mouth with his own. Hannibal kisses harshly, with teeth and probing tongue and Will moans at the onslaught. Hannibal stops and pulls away; Will opens his eyes. The other man is stepping out of his slacks and underwear. Will's penis throbs in response, a damp patch beginning to appear through his own briefs.

"I need to be inside you."

Will swallows and nods, beginning to unbuckle his belt as Hannibal finishes stripping."Too slow." Will's hands are pushed aside and Hannibal tugs his belt off, tossing it away.

"I can..." Will begins but stops when he is slammed back into the door. Stunned, he allows Hannibal to undress him as he rubs the back of his head. "Why'd you..." He's beginning when his hips are seized and he's being lifted and pressed-up against the wall. Hannibal wraps the smaller man's legs around his waist.

"Jesus! Slow down..." But Hannibal's mouth has taken possession of Will's neck, sucking marks along its length and his spread-wide asshole is being breached by a long finger; Hannibal bites down hard. "Ah!"

Hannibal grunts and licks the welt as he forces another finger inside. Will arches, attempting to relax into the burn; precum already beading-up and trickling down the front of his erection. Hannibal massages the top of Will's sticky penis while rubbing his own secretions along his own length. It's not enough to serve as lubricant, but Hannibal is in the mood to make his mark; he wants Will to feel this fuck for days.

"You like it rough as much as I do," Hannibal breathes into his lover's neck and begins to push inside. Dangling four feet off the ground, Will has no leverage as Hannibal pushes in. "The worst part is nearly over," Hannibal pants as Will's entrance spasms and attempts to tighten against the intrusion. "Don't tighten-up," he warns, but Will is in pain; Hannibal's dick is cutting a searing swath into his very core.

"Can't help it," he chokes. "Burns."

Hannibal places his forehead onto Will's chest and thrusts upwards. Will groans and squirms, his body trying to escape the inevitable as Hannibal pushes in inch after slow inch.

"Get some lube!" Will complains tears seeping out of the corner of his eye.

"Still packed," Hannibal grunts continuing to push until he's all the way inside Will's tight channel. Will's breathing is choppy and his eyes are closed; he's no longer enjoying this.

For reasons not fully understood by himself, Hannibal pulls out and forces himself back inside, battering Will's already swollen passage. Will groans and slams his head against the wall, a dead weight in Hannibal's arms.

Then Hannibal changes position, and watches the tension slowly bleed out of the other man's face, pleasure finally complementing the pain. *There it is...Good boy.*

William walks down stairs and through large, echoing rooms until he reaches an outside door hooked to an alarm system. *Humpf...not my problem if something goes off*. He unlocks the door and steps outside.

The wind is cold and raw, much colder than France and it creeps into his coat and through his layers; he pulls down his knit hat, wishing now he had gloves as well. The grounds are spacious and grayish-brown as far as the eye can see. *It's like everything is dead. Where are all the birds? Or squirrels?* He runs to keep warm, exploring a maze of pathways, passing under arches, and through box hedges, finally coming to stop in front of a large fountain.

"Creepy." He whispers, then wishes he'd kept quiet. *Oh no!* He stares upwards as the boughs of trees begin to swish violently. *Now the garden knows I'm here!* A swirl of dead leaves rushes towards him, piling-up against his feet.

Then he sees the handprint.

"Can't...come."

Sweat is pouring off Will's forehead as he writhes and squirms. Hannibal is jack-hammering in and out of him, determined to make Will come untouched, but they've been at it for nearly an hour, and Will still hasn't climaxed.

Hannibal thrusts one more time and comes, his sweaty front coming into contact with Will's poor, throbbing dick; Will gladly ruts against it.

"No."

Hannibal, still pumping cum into Will, leans down, sucks a nipple into his mouth and bites down.

William turns and runs, heeding neither direction nor bearings. He runs until he reaches a yard, crunchy with gravel but covered with mud and weeds. A quick glance over his shoulder shows he's safe. *Duh! What did you think was going to be there? A bloody kid? 'Sides,* he thinks as he kicks a clump of weeds, *that wasn't blood...it had to be paint!*

Paint or not, William feels jangled, like he'd just seen something nasty. *Stupid!* He kicks the clump of weeds again and it goes flying. *Some kid put their handprint on that fountain...no big deal!* Soon he is calm enough to notice the structure at the end of the yard. *Is that a stable? Wish they had horses! Maybe Chiyoh has one and I could ride it.*

The door has a shiny new padlock hanging open on a hinge. *Weird! It's brand new but it's not locked*. William fiddles with it and it falls to the ground. Freed, the door swings open and the boy wrinkles his nose. The air smells dank and musty, nothing like the sweet hay and manure smell of the Verger barns.

William has an epiphany. *This is what Hannibal wanted me to see!*

"I wouldn't go inside...if you knew what was good for you."

William's mocking grin is the first thing Chiyoh sees when he turns around. *Smug little, bastard.*

"Hannibal said I could." He sees that Chiyoh is dressed for hunting, with a broken shot gun slung over one shoulder and an empty game bag in the other one. "What're you going to shoot?"

"Dr. Lecter is his proper title ..and pheasants." The woman strides over and picks-up the lock. "How did you get this off? Give me back the key."

"I told you...Hannibal wants me to see what's inside so he unlocked it."

Chiyoh stares down at the child, who stares boldly back. It's clear he believes the tale he is telling her. *Psychopaths often do.*

"Why...what's inside?"

Chiyoh's mouth turns grim. "A monster."

"Fuck!"

Will's back cramps as he arches sharply; Hannibal is biting his nipple. The orgasm which has been eluding him hits so hard, his eyes roll back. When it's finally over, he slumps down, sated but sore. *Wow.* His ears are ringing, his ass, back and nipple are throbbing, and not in a good way. "Wow..."

Hannibal is resting the full weight of his head on Will's shoulder, panting.

"What's the matter old man?" Will grins, closing his weary eyes. "Too much for..." he pauses as Hannibal pulls-out and a rivulet of come drips onto the floor. "You?" He laughs into Hannibal's face, as he's lowered onto his feet. "Whoa...don't have my sea legs yet." He complains, limping to the bed and soiling the pristine counterpane. Hannibal walks over and leans down, rubs their cheeks together; a jungle cat marking his territory.

"Good...when shall you be able to go again?"

"Again? So soon?" Will wonders at Hannibal's refractory time. *It's got to be longer than mine! He's at least ten years older. Unless he's sneaking Viagra.*

"No hurry," Hannibal murmurs into Will's salty skin and takes a quick lick. "How would you like me? From behind, or on my back?"

"Jesus," Will moans and collapses backwards onto the bed. Hannibal follows him down and presses him into the mattress...and yes...there it is...the faintest beginning of an erection. Hannibal pushes the hair out of his eyes and smiles devilishly. Triumphant. "Well?"

Will laughs then groans. "On your back then...but not until we have lube...even if it means raiding the pantry."

"Excellent!" Hannibal hops up, opens a drawer and pulls out a handful of sachets. "Voilà!"

"Oh! Now you remember! Too late for me though!"

Hannibal returns to the bed and begins to leisurely suck Will back to hardness. "Yes...too late for you." He agrees lips shiny with semen and spit.

Will shakes his head. "Sadistic bastard!" He grabs Hannibal's forelock, yanking the man's head up. "How'd you like me to do that to you?"

Hannibal's delighted grin tells Will all he needs to know.

"Alright then." Chiyoh swings the door all the way open. *Let the boy hang himself on his own petard*. "Since you already have permission."

William looks from the woman to the dark interior and back again. "It's dark...and what did you mean 'monster'?"

"There are lanterns."

"You first."

Chiyoh laughs; the boy's bravado is gone. "Alright, but keep your voice very low. The occupant is easily agitated."

"Why won't you tell me what it is?" William imagines a Frankenstein monster chained to a wall.

Chiyoh steps inside and waits for William to follow before answering. "*It* is hard to describe."

"Why? Is it a giant snake? A weird bug?!" William wonders how safe this is, following Chiyoh to an unknown creature. *It's gross in here, like a dungeon...or the catacombs.* "What kind of 'it'?" He repeats.

Chiyoh stops before a door and takes a key from a hook. "A monster who slaughtered innocents and performed unspeakable acts."

William's eyes widen, he hopes he won't be triggered into seeing Freddie lying on the cold stones. "A monster? Like a werewolf?!" He squeaks.

Chiyoh shrugs. "You'll see...remember, be..."

ARRRGGGGG

William nearly screams. What sounds like a human voice has begun screeching on the other side of the wall. Chiyoh placidly watches the boy's face.

"Maybe we shouldn't go in. It sounds mad."

"It is...would you like to see him?"

"Him? It's a boy? A wolf?"

"You'll see...He is locked in a cage."

"Wait! Maybe Hannibal unlocked it!"

Chiyoh gives the boy a sharp look, the screaming inside the chamber is reaching it's inevitable crescendo; she barely notices, inured to it after all these years. "Why would he do that?"

"Because..." the boy's teeth are beginning to chatter, "be...because he would want to see what would haaaappen."

Chiyoh has an odd feeling, as though she's hearing a piece of music she hasn't listened to in a long, long, time. *The little scoundrel is right*. "Then we must be prepared...mustn't we?"

She loads the shotgun and clicks off the safety. "Better?"

William nods. "A little."

Chiyoh is amused. "Only a little? *It* resides behind locked bars and I am armed."

Behind the door the creature is howling; the hairs on the back of William's neck stand on end. "Cuz this might be a set-up."

Chiyoh's eyes narrow. "'A set-up'?"

"Yeah! You bring me in there, let it attack me and then you shoot us both!"

Hmmm...That would be efficient. Chiyoh shakes her head and puts the key in the lock. "You are being paranoid." The door swings open and the howling abruptly stops.

Chiyoh steps inside.

The putrid air of the closed chamber is smothering. William buries his nose and mouth into the crook of his arm. "God! What is that?! It smells horrible!"

Chiyoh says nothing, just stands waiting for William's eyes to adjust to the gloom. Slowly, he begins to see details. Every surface is wet and slimy. *What a horrible place to keep an animal...wait...Oh my God! What is that?*

At the far end of the room is a jail cell, festooned with bits of bone and sticks, strung together with twine. And inside the cell is a frail figure, a caricature of a man, dressed in rags, staring straight at him. William stares back, bug-eyed.

"Boy!" The thing screams and William nearly falls backwards in fright. The man reaches out his hands, directing a stream of Lithuanian words to William he can barely make-out: "please", "boy", "help", "here", and "come."

Undisturbed, Chiyoh goes to check the cell's locking mechanism. As soon as she is within range, the man lunges, a piece of sharpened bone clutched in a claw-like hand. Unruffled, Chiyoh rifle-butts him and the man crumples to the ground, shrieking in pain; odd figurines fashioned of bone and wood scatter everywhere.

Oh my God! "That's not an 'it'!" William yells over the noise. "That's a man!"

Chiyoh finishes her inspection then returns to him. "Once upon a time he was a man...an evil one...but he hasn't been human for years." She looks down at the boy for emphasis. "*It* has no conscience...no soul."

William swallows and nods. *Like Hannibal*. "What's his name?"

"It has none...It gave up the right of a name long ago. Have you seen enough?"

William nods again, never taking his eyes off the man in the cell. The prisoner, seeing his potential rescuer leaving throws himself at the bars, pleading, begging, and crying.

"Pay it no mind," Chiyoh orders tersely, pushing William ahead of her."It's tears mean nothing." She shuts and locks the door. "It's victims cried and begged...begged for mercy...but their tears didn't save them...her tears didn't save her."

"Who?" William is confused. "Whose tears?"

"Mischa. Hannibal's little sister."

After this shocking revelation, Chiyoh refuses to answer any more of William's questions.

"Either go back to the house or be quiet." She finally barks. "You are giving me a headache and your chatter is scaring away all the birds."

"Fine!" William huffs, insulted. But rather than wander back through the dead gardens, he decides to stay and act as her retriever.

"How many do we need?" He complains when they've been hunting for what seems like hours and the light has faded. "I'm starving!"

"These six should suffice...but they are not for tonight...they must be hung first."

"Hmmm...Why don't you have a dog? Or a horse?"

"Perhaps now you're living here, Dr. Lecter will allow you to keep a dog." Chiyoh goes inside her work shed to hangs the birds.

"Stay here? I'm not going to live here!" *I don't wanna live here!*

"Speak to Dr. Lecter. He makes the decisions... come and wash your hands."

Too many people boss me around! But William complies anyway; his hands are covered in blood and feathers. "You live here all by yourself?" He asks as he dries his hands.

"Yes, unless you count the thing in the stable."

Oh yeah, him. "Not him...regular people like a husband or a kid. Why do you live here all alone?"

"I am Dr. Lecter's steward...and I am not always alone, staff comes and goes."

Chiyoh closes and locks the shed and begins to walk away. William runs after her, he still has no idea how to get back to the house; the trees obscure everything.

"Well, we're not staying...Hannibal says we're moving to Italy soon." Chiyoh appears not to have heard him. *She knows something she's not telling me*! "Did you hear me?! We're going to Italy soon!"

Chiyoh shakes her head. "This is not my business...speak to Dr. Lecter."

She thinks I'm getting dumped here! "Just so you know...I'm not staying here with you!"

Chiyoh shrugs and picks up her pace. *The Enemy sharing Hannibal's hearth and bed would not have been my choice either.*

By the time they reach the house, William is spoiling for a fight. But before he can run off, Chiyoh grabs his arm and yanks him towards her. "Don't be a fool!" She hisses in a low voice."Acting like a spoiled brat will get you nowhere!" She loosens her hold; William stares

up at her. *Finally! Listening to reason!* "Dr. Lecter is not always so patient and forgiving, boy! Already you have pushed him beyond what he is accustomed to accepting."

William's mouth turns down.

"Your papa is gone...accept that...move on. Live your own life and be happy with it!" Chiyoh gives the boy a little shove for emphasis.

"Chiyoh? William? How did you fare?" Hannibal is calling from another room.

"Go wash your face, compose yourself." Chiyoh advices the shaken child. "Come back when you are calmer." Then in a louder voice." Very well! We bagged six fine pheasants!"

William follows her pointing finger and finds a bathroom. He goes inside, locks the door and stares at himself in the mirror.

He stares for a long, long, time thinking about his mother, and Bella, and Jack. When he finally joins the group he knows what he must do.

Chapter End Notes

Hi guys- thanks for reading, sorry update is so long in coming, life is hard, but fan fiction helps.

The Letter

Chapter Summary

Hoping to put a wedge between father and son, our happy duckling shares a letter with William.

Chapter Notes

POV:
Everyday the news is so disheartening. I march, I text my representatives, I donate money, but in the end, I feel powerless against the graft and corruption of our government. Fanfic is such a nice place to hideout in, even for a few hours.
thanks for reading.

The grown-ups are grouped around the salon sipping wine when William finally reappears.

"Everything okay?" Will asks.

"Mmmhmmm, just kinda tired." William's belly feels a jolt of nerves; Hannibal's eyes are sweeping over him like a lighthouse beacon.

"You look as though you might be sickening for something...come here Kleinmaus."

William knows better than to ignore a direct order. Hannibal sets his glass down and takes William's face between his warm palms. The boy stares at Hannibal's tie pin as the doctor bends to press his lips against William's forehead; William feels the soft stir of air as he's scented. "You feel warm...but your nodes aren't swollen." The large hands tilt William's head until he is looking straight into Hannibal's eyes. *One, two, three.* William counts as those cold, clinical brown eyes stare into his. Hannibal blinks and his face comes back to life. He swipes a palm across William's forehead as if to erase that image of himself and in an unexpected move, scoops the boy into his arms.

Chiyoh, noting Will's startled reaction, chimes in. "He said he wasn't feeling well, probably picked-up a chill while we were outside. Better to take a hot bath and go to bed, I will bring up some broth," she turns to consult The Enemy," or miso, if he prefers."

"What's going on?"

William's heart leaps. *Dad isn't buying this.*

Ignoring the woman, Will sets down his glass and strides over to Hannibal; he holds out his arms. Feeling foolish, William, leans towards him and is transferred to his father; inexplicable tears prick his eyes. He hides his face in Will's neck.

"Nothing that a bath and a day in bed can't remedy," Hannibal counters," but I do feel responsible...he was out too long in this weather while we..."

Were fucking like rabbits. Will shakes his head as he rubs his son's back. Hannibal nods.

"I'll take him -"

"We'll both take him." Hannibal interjects and William's heart sinks.

"I can walk!" William demands and is immediately set down. He hasn't taken one step before a strong hand grips his shoulder, leading him towards the hallway. "I can go take a shower by myself!" He protests as they begin to ascend the stairs.

"A bath is more therapeutic," Hannibal counters, "we need to raise your core temperature."

My what? "Dad! I'm not taking a bath like a baby!" William's voice is tight with embarrassment.

"Baths aren't for babies...but if you don't want to take one, you don't have to." Will sounds so much like he did back when they lived together, William sneaks a peek. *He even looks more like he did back then.*

Both men pretend not to notice when the boy takes his father's hand and leans against him as they walk.

Hannibal smiles to himself.

"And don't forget to use soap!" Will yells through the door.

"I knoooow!"

Hannibal is selecting William's pajama set. "Something warm...and perhaps socks as well? And I need to hunt out a thermometer."

"Hmmm," Will agrees. In his mind, he sees William encased in a sleeping bag, surrounded by sprawling dogs before a crackling fire. The dogs snore, the fire pops, and the wood smoke tickles his nose, it's mellow notes echoed in the bite of his whiskey. Will grins; Buster has once again commandeered his son's pillow.

Hannibal nods sympathetically as he watches Will retreat into his Mind Palace. *The boy is not the positive influence I'd hope he would be.*

Will is back. "What's going on...and don't lie to me." Though he hears the shower running, Will's voice is a low hiss.

Unperturbed, Hannibal sets the pajamas on the bed. "I have a prisoner."

Oh...oh course! That's a natural occurance here at Lecter Manor. A fucking prisoner. "Alright, you have a prisoner. Who and where?"

Hannibal walks to the window and pulls the curtain aside. "Just out there."

Will peers out into the darkness. "Why?"

"My sister..." Hannibal stops, seemingly overcome.

Leaping to a dark conclusion, Will suppresses a gasp. *Fuck, Hannibal?! You didn't Miriam Lass your own sister did you?!* "Her name was Mischa...I remember." He takes Hannibal's hand.

"She was young when she...was assaulted and murdered, here, in our home by a family friend; a doctor."

Will sees.

" Hannibal...I'm so sorry...the one place in the world she felt safest." *Defiled*. He leads Hannibal to the bed so they can sit.

"Chiyoh was still a young girl at the time, but her courage and loyalty was without precedent. I owe her so much."

"Hmmm." *That explains a lot.*

"She's been responsible for him all these years...but maybe that was a mistake."

Will's face changes. "William..." *While Hannibal was fucking me into next week!*

"Chiyoh took him...but don't be too harsh on her, she's battles her own demons, but she would never place the child in harm's way."

Will attempts to control his rage. "Until today." *That bitch!*

Hannibal nestles into Will's neck. "Time to settle old debts." When he lifts his head, his smile is joyful, his eyes brimming with good humor.

Will's eyes narrow. *Get thee behind me Satan*. But just as quickly, he's shaking his head and sighing.

The door of the bathroom opens; William, modestly wrapped in two enormous towels sticks his head-out. *What are those weirdos doing? Laughing?* "Why are you laughing?!"

"Nothing of import katinėlis." Hannibal hands him his pajamas. "We will tell you after you've dressed. How are you feeling? I still would like to take your temperature."

"I'm fine." William closes and locks the door; ever since the raid he refuses to dress or disrobe unless he is alone.

"His color looks better...it's possible he's just..."

"What the hell was Chiyoh thinking?"

Will has worked himself up again so Hannibal lays a hand on his arm. "It will be alright, we'll talk to her and to him then..."

"What...a hunt?"

Hannibal thanks the Universe for this gorgeous man. "Merely doing what I should have done years ago...God abhors a procrastinator."

William comes back into the room. *Yuck...get a room!* "So...what's going on? Is this about the man in the stable?"

"Yes...is that why you're upset?"

William shoots Hannibal a look. *Yup...he's covered his ass...dad wouldn't believe me even if I told him the truth!*

William's bad mood turns foul. "I'm fine! Geez! I'm not a baby!"

"That has already been established," Will's tone could dry paint. "But it must have been scary. What happened?"

William shrugs and reluctantly allows himself to be led to the overlarge bed and tucked-in, Will sits beside him while Hannibal stands at it's foot.

"He screamed a lot...and he yelled at me...he tried to stab Chiyoh with something but she whacked him with her rifle...BAM!"

Will flinches at William's gleeful pantomime. "What did he say to you? Was Chiyoh with you the whole time?"

"I think he only knows Lithuanian, or maybe he forgot all his English. I couldn't really understand much...just 'boy' and 'help'...stuff like that....and yeah, she was there...she beamed him good!"

William rambles on for a while about the dungeon and the prisoner's crafts. "Chiyoh told me that he did 'unspeakable acts' and that he isn't a person anymore," he concludes, watching Hannibal carefully. Hannibal smiles but Will looks uncertain. "Don't worry," William rushes on, "I don't think that way about you." *Just your boyfriend*.

"So we all agree the time has come...my prisoner should to pay for his crimes."

William wrinkles his face. "I guess...I don't know...what would you do? Ewwww...he is so stringy and stinky, are you really going to cook him?"

Will glances at Hannibal. *Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth*.

"We'll see...so tomorrow, you will stay in the house while tėvelis and I take care of our... infestation problem."

"Is Chiyoh going to help?"

"If she cares to."

"She gets to but not me? That's not fair!"

Fuck...this is getting out of control. "Too bad Buster Brown! That isn't for you to decide?"

William is about to appeal to the more sympathetic parent when Chiyoh enters with a tray."Is now a good time?" She inquires frowning; The Enemy and his son are staring at her as though she is an intruder. *This is more my home than yours!*

"Thank you Chiyoh! It all looks delicious! And as always your timing is impeccable." Hannibal takes the tray from her and sets it on a table. "Will and I were just discussing the hunt we're planning for tomorrow."

"Oh yes? There is very little available now...are you hoping to raise a boar?"

"In a way," Hannibal agrees, fondly recalling Mason Verger and the frenzied objects of his affection. "We are setting your prisoner free tomorrow."

Chiyoh takes the news so stoically; Will wonders if she already knew.

"I see...in that case, I would like to be included."

As William looks from adult to adult Hannibal catches his eye and winks. *Shit! I bet he's gonna let me do it too! Unless...William has a sudden image of Will crouched over him, weeping while Chiyoh and Hannibal look on. Maybe that isn't such a good idea after all!*

"Of course," Hannibal replies and Chiyoh nods her thanks, "we would be happy to include you." He watches William suspiciously track Chiyoh's departure. *The child thinks I am setting him up to be murdered? I wonder if Chiyoh's moral code would allow that...now that's an interesting thought.*

Much later that night, a knock sounds on William's door. "Are you still awake?"

"Yes." The door opens and Hannibal dressed in nightclothes enters. "Where's dad?"

"Already sleeping." *With a little help*. "Why aren't you? Nervous about tomorrow?"

William shrugs. "Should I be?"

"I was under the impression that you would like to be included, with proper supervision of course."

"Included in what?" William has a perverse need to hear Hannibal say exactly what they will be doing tomorrow.

"Are you attempting to get a rise out of me?"

"No!" *It's not fair, he has all the power and I have none. It wasn't like that with dad.*

"No..."

"No...sorry for being rude." *Whatever.*

"Thank you." Hannibal sits where Will had earlier. "So...you will be well rested enough to participate?"

"To hunt that guy?"

Hannibal laughs. *Stubborn boy...you should know I always win.*

"Are you going to give him a gun too?"

"No, would you?"

William wriggles his toes. "I don't know, probably not."

"Mmmhmmm. When you were young, and asked about your father, what would your mother tell you?"

"Huh?!" *What's he doing!?*

"Surely you noticed you were different from other little boys and girls...saw that they had both a mommy and a daddy? Did you think it was because he didn't love you? Didn't love your mother?"

William's pits prickle. *Breathe! He's just trying to get into your head!*

"William, could you answer the question please? And don't lie...I can always tell when you are lying."

"It was fine." *Ohmygodohmygod. What is he doing!?*

"I won't countenance lies William...now...please, help me help you."

William is silent. *What's the point, I always lose.*

My dear little ožiukas...so stubborn. "You once asked me about a letter, do you remember?" *There...that piqued your interest.*

"Those letters? From the group home?"

"No, katinėlis, the one I left with you at your father's home...did you ever have the opportunity to read it?"

William's thin defenses are breached. "You mean after you killed John and called my mom a liar?!"

"I already apologized for that...do I need to repeat myself?"

"Hmmph...what about it?"

"Would you like to see it?"

"You don't have it! The FBI has it!" *Mr. Crawford said he would show it to me if I went to therapy, bet he was lying though!*

"I made a copy." Hannibal pulls an envelope out of his robe. "Go ahead, take it."

William's hand has nearly reached the envelope when Hannibal snatches it away.

"Hey!"

"Hay's for horses, oats are better if you can't get corn!"

What the fuck? In William's current mood Hannibal's teasing is especially annoying. "Can I see it? Please!?"

"Yes you may!" Hannibal chuckles, handing it over.

William examines the envelope. "You copied this?"

"Yes, do you recognize the handwriting?"

William shakes his head. "Maybe, I don't know." *It says it's from mom!* He looks at the cancellation. "There's a year...this was when we still lived in Pennsylvania...I was like...five...William Graham, C...O?"

"Care of," Hannibal prompts.

"Care of, Sergeant Mills, Vice, NOPD." *Maybe I shouldn't read this. How do I even know it's real?*

With an air of disapproval, Hannibal is pulling a cell phone out of his pocket. He enters a number and places the phone on speaker.

"Since you doubt me, here, talk to someone who can confirm its authenticity. " He thrusts the phone into William's hand.

The boy has barely registered what's happening when a voice answers.

"Crawford."

William drops the phone.

Jack sets down the case file of the most recent "Tooth Fairy" murders and re-checks the number. *Blocked. Mmhmm.*

"Crawford," he says again. *Man I don't have time for this shit.*

The sound of fumbling; the rustling of fabric. Jack massages his temple. *'Blocked' better not be beating one off right now.*

Jack's thoughts have been centering around copious amounts of DNA evidence lately; The Tooth Fairy is a secretor but sadly not in the system.

A small, tentative voice. "Mr. Crawford?"

Jack falls back into his chair. *William...it can't be.* "William? Is that you son?"

Silence.

"William? William Wyse?"

"Hey."

Oh my God. "William, can you tell me where you are? Is your dad with you?"

William raises his eyes to Hannibal, unsure of what to do.

"William? William? Are you still there?"

William hands the phone back to Hannibal who switches it off. All at once the boy feels as though his limbs are moving through molasses. He looks down to where the letter is resting against his leg.

"Would you like me to read it to you?"

"Okay," William agrees, just the act of sitting is sapping his little remaining energy. "If you want to..."

"I do."

"Dear Will," Hannibal begins; the boy's eyes slide shut. "Are you listening William?"

"Mmmhmmm." *What is he talking about? Oh yeah, the letter.*

"Good...Dear Will,"

I am so sorry to hear you were injured, but thankful that your prognosis is good. I am working forensics here at Harrisburg P.D. and have bought a little home.
But what I really wanted to tell you is that I have a son. He is five years old and is named William, after, you, his father.
Not to pressure you, but he is at the age where he asks about you all the time.
I'm so sorry I didn't tell you before, Will. But in my defense, while were still together, I didn't know where your head was at most of the time. Maybe I didn't know where mine at was at either.
If you are married with children or in a relationship, please believe me, I am not out to sabotage you.
William is the best thing that ever happened to me, and he is all I need.
But, if you would like to meet him, call me at the number below.
If you decide not to, I guess I can understand that too.
Whatever happens, please Will, take care of yourself and let me know how you are doing.

Love,
Lottie and Willy

Hannibal folds the letter and slots it back into its envelope.

Yawing, William opens his eyes. "So?"

"How does hearing this make you feel?"

"About what?"

Hannibal feels both disappointment and surprise. *Maybe he isn't as intelligent as I'd credited him being.*

"Do you see? Your father knew of your existence for five years, but never made an effort to meet you...to be a part of your life."

"Oh...that..." William dismissively yawns again. He sinks back against his pillows, his eyes sliding shut. *Just one more lie...so what...you all do it...even Mr. Crawford.*

Hannibal pulls the bedclothes up and gently sweeps the back of his hand along the boy's downy cheek *He's retreating. I wonder how deeply. Jack is clearly more than just an authority figure to him.* "Goodnight William. I will see you in the morning."

"Mmmm," William murmurs already immersed within a memory of his own.

Hannibal continues to sit beside the boy, hoping to glean more information but eventually concedes defeat. *Best return to Will. He will be coming out of sedation soon*.

Hannibal tidies the room and noiselessly slips into the hall.

Outside in his cell, the prisoner turns fitfully in his sleep, unaware that his last day on earth has already begun.

The Hunt

Chapter Summary

The grown-ups have a hunt, William and Will have a heart to heart, Bedelia wishes Mason would choke on a straw.

Chapter Notes

Nearing finals *drags exhausted self to keyboard*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

All that night William dreams.

He dreams he's running through strange houses, down strange streets, through strange towns, catching glimpses of his mother but never reaching her. Close to dawn, he bolts awake, heart thumping, slides out of bed and pads to the bathroom. He pees in the dark; rebelliously refusing to either flush or wash then walks out to the bank of windows. *It's still really dark...wonder if Mr. Crawford believed it was me...I wonder if he ever misses me.*

William rests his head on the icy pane. *Wonder what those little kids are doing right now...Kurt...he was the littler one...Kurt and ... I can't remember the other one's name. Wonder where Bedelia is... dead probably.*

Gloomily, the boy stares out the window until the sky begins to lighten and an outside light blinks on. Curious, William cranes his neck to get a better look. *I think that's Chiyoh's little shed. That means Hannibal's probably up too, or maybe she gets up early to feed that guy...I wish she would help us...but there's no way. Bet he's going to get her to...*

William forces himself to stop before he finishes his thought and wraps his arms around his middle. *I wanna go home,* he thinks for the millionth time and checks behind him; the room is dark and empty. *Where's mom when I need her? Wait! Maybe I can steal Hannibal's phone! Bet he has a whole bunch of those crappy phones somewhere! Yeah!*

Hopeful once more, William dresses and is waiting when the quiet knock announces Hannibal's arrival. Previously, helping his pseudo father with breakfast preparations was a ritual William grumbled about, but secretly enjoyed. Now, just being around the man makes the boy's skin crawl.

The door opens and Hannibal is there, holding out his hand. Listlessly William takes it but turns his face away. *Fucker. Showing me that letter...probably thought I'd go crazy and whack dad with an ax or something.* Anger compels him to look up. *Yup he's laughing at me...well I'm not talking to you anymore...ever!*

As soon as they reach the kitchen, William pulls his hand from Hannibal's and goes to wash.

Hannibal nods his approval. "Now...what to prepare? Something hearty I think...something appropriate for a hunt." He smiles at the child's shrug and joins him at the sink.

Will comprehends what's been done to him the moment he becomes conscious. *Why the hell did he sedate me?* Ignoring a burning thirst and uncomfortably full bladder, he checks his son's room before following his nose to the kitchen.

"There you are," he says with relief; William is grating cheese into a bowl.

Hannibal comes over for his morning kiss, his eyes crinkling with playful amusement at Will's rumpled appearance then returns to the range.

Seeing his son like this, exhausted and emotionally depleted, reignites the anger surrounding his sedation. "Whatcha making?"

"I don't know...some carousal thing."

"Hmmm," he chuckles, ruffling the top of his boy's head while catching Hannibal's eye." A casserole? Sounds good! Sure am thirsty this morning! Can I get a glass of water?"

Hannibal smirks. "Of course."

Will studies his son. "You look tired...didn't sleep well?"

"No," wide, blue eyes, so much like his own swivel up at him, "but I talked to Mr. Crawford last night."

"Will? Your water?" Hannibal nudges the other man. *Upon consideration.* He lifts the glass and enjoys a long drink. *Ahhhh...pure, fresh water...a taste of childhood.*

William rolls his eyes. "Did you hear me? I talked to him...on Hannibal's cell."

Will holds out his hand to accept the glass. *Hannibal is bringing events to a climax. Fuck.*

William peers up at his father curiously. "Your eyes look weird." *Like a stuffed bear's...that's what Bedelia usta say my eyes looked like.*

"William, I'd like to speak with you...alone." Will sets the glass down.

Block of cheese clutched in his hand, William feels Hannibal's anger, superimposed over his own fear. "Dad?"

"Its fine, William, you can finish helping after we've had a little talk."

"As the boy's other parent, I would like to be included in the discussion."

"As someone who was just drugged, I feel I've earned the right to speak to him alone," Will fires back in Italian.

"Working together is better...for us and the boy," Hannibal returns in the same language, sighing at Will's stubbornness. "But if you're resolute, here," he pulls the copy of Lottie's letter out of his jacket, "this might come up during your talk."

Will takes the papers without looking at them and allows Hannibal to help him into his coat. "Thank you...I would have been freezing without it. Okay, let's go buddy...front and center."

Father and son walk as far away from the house as possible; down the main pathway away from the decorative gardens and outside buildings. They don't stop until they're in front of the padlocked main gate.

"William..."

"Hmmm?"

"I need your help."

"You do?"

"Mmhmm...I need you to help me get you back home."

"Oh..." *That's all...he just wants me gone.* William's anger and hurt bubbles up."So? Why'd you make me come all the way out here to tell me that? I already know you don't want me! You never wanted me! You lied to mom and then you lied to me!"

William tries pushing Will away and making a break for it, but his father strategically hems him into a corner. "Calm down...getting angry isn't going to help. I never lied to your mother...is that what Hannibal told you?"

"No! That's what you told me! You told me you didn't know about me!"

Will shakes his head. "I didn't, William, I promise."

"But you had that letter!" He points at the sheets in Will's hand.

"This one?!" Will waves the papers. "These aren't...William...whatever this is, can't prove I lied to you, or your mother. Did Hannibal give this to you?"

"Yes! And then he called Mr. Crawford cuz Mr. Crawford has the real one!"

"Oooh...I see...hold on a minute. Stay right there...I need to look at this."

William stomps his foot in frustration, but stays put, glaring, as Will's eyes fly over the copies of the letter and envelope. Watching his father's face change as he reads, William's anger dissipates. *He really didn't know about this! Maybe Hannibal really did fake it!* " Dad? Dad?!"

Will's face has gone blank, his brain furiously working to make sense of confusing, contradictory memories.

"Dad!"

"Yes?"

To the boy's relief, Will looks present again. "Can the FBI tell when a letter was opened? Like if it was opened a long time after it was put in the envelope?"

Will nods. "Yes...I see what you mean. Did Mr. Crawford tell you that was what happened?"

"No...I never asked him...but..."

"It would explain why I had the letter but don't remember it." Will waves the sheets of papers for emphasis. "I've never seen this before. It was probably stored it in my barn with the rest of my records from NOPD...Hannibal must have found it."

William nods succinctly. "Mmmhmmm. He stole it and...OH! He...it wasn't Mr. Verger who...it was Hannibal!" *Mom! Hannibal did do it! Hannibal killed you!* William struggles to keep a hold of his anger as a fresh wave of grief smacks into him.

"I..." *Oh my God...Lottie...you must have thought I was such an asshole!* "William...you're right. Jack and I think Hannibal paid someone to hurt you and...hurt...your mom." He pauses and check's his son's condition; William's breathing is heavy, but he's handling himself well.

"Go on...I want to hear it."

"I don't understand why he did it. I really don't buddy...somehow bringing you to my attention was Hannibal's way of allowing me to parent, to be someone's dad." He smiles sadly at the boy, still so young but no longer an innocent. " A kind of...consolation prize because he took Abigail away...and because of what happened to another child...my child."

William frowns. "Another child? You mean like I have a brother or a sister?" William's heart leaps with hope. *I have a brother or sister?!* "Where are they?"

Will looks away; the memory of that betrayal is sickeningly strong. William's stomach clinches, he feels as though he might vomit.

"Dead...it was never born. Mason's sister Margot..."

"Margot," William whispers, his hand worming into Will's, "she and you were having a baby?"

Will nods, squeezing back and manages a wan smile; William looks so tragic. "Yes, but that baby...died. Abigail died...so...here you are."

Oh. "You think I'm next?"

Will takes William's other hand. "No...he wouldn't."

William isn't comforted or convinced." He killed John and then this old man...I saw it...did you see him stab John?"

"Yes...but as soon as it happened I was hit with a stun gun, and then he gave me a shot which make me sleep." *God how are we going to do this?*

"Teddy bear eyes," William murmurs. "I knew it! Mr. Crawford told me you were faking it! I knew you weren't faking it! I found you! I dragged you out of a car but..." William's eyes are shimmering pools.

Horrified and repentant, Will pulls the child into his arms. William hugs back ferociously, feeling for the first time since his arrival, that he is with his father, the one he fought so hard to be with; the one whom he loves and who loves him.

"I'm sorry...I'm sorry I couldn't protect you...I'm sorry...I'm sorry." Will is fighting tears, mindful they are now being observed. "We're going to get you out of here," he whispers and the boy goes still.

"Everything alright?"

William places his mouth next to his father's ear. "Let's kill her," he breathes.

Shocked, Will jerks away and turns toward the woman impatiently awaiting a response. *Too bad she's armed.* "Chiyoh...what can we do for you?"

Chiyoh's expression doesn't change, but her eyes do. "You?" She snorts mirthlessly." Nothing...perhaps the better question Mr. Graham, is what I can do for you."

"Are you finished? Good...then you may be excused...straight up to your room now."

"Okay."

William folds his napkin and pushes his chair in. Frankly he's happy to have some alone time without Hannibal. *I have a lot to think about.*

"Thank you." Hannibal takes a final sip of coffee and pats his mouth with a pristine napkin."Will? Chiyoh? Shall we discuss a strategy? Oh, William...wait a moment...weren't you planning on saying goodbye and good hunting to your father? And our hostess?"

William turns back around. "Bye...and good luck, I guess."

"See you soon sweetheart." The endearment slips-out before Will can stop himself, but the boy doesn't even blink.

"Goodbye William." Chiyoh's affect gives nothing away.

"Bye...good hunting."

William heads up to his room and stations himself at the window. Ten minutes later, the trio appear, each carrying a rifle. They pause for a moment, appear to have a quick conversation, then fan-out.

There they go. I wonder who's going to get to him first? Hey! Maybe I can find a phone while they're out there!

William runs out of his room and towards the master bedroom, hoping for once he'll catch a break and find it unlocked.

In spite of his poor condition, the prisoner remains wily and dangerous. Fifteen minutes after the signal, Will, follows a trail of broken branches to a small clearing. He finds the man and Chiyoh locked in deadly, near-silent combat. Will steps behind a group of saplings to watch. In a matter of moments, Hannibal appears beside him. They stand together, silently observing.

"He's stronger than he appears," Will says quietly.

"Yes, revenge is a powerful motivator." Hannibal hands Will a flask as Chiyoh's rifle is knocked to the ground.

"No!" Chiyoh screams as the prisoner body slams her into a bush. Screeching in triumph he straddles the woman, wrapping his claw-like hands around her throat.

"Do you think he intends to sexually violate her as well?" Hannibal muses.

"Shouldn't we intervene?" *She's no use to me dead.*

But at that moment, Chiyoh head butts her attacker. The man slumps to one side like a doll. Grunting with effort, the woman pushes him off and stands, breathing heavily, before carefully collecting a mouthful of saliva and spitting it into his face. Her formal prisoner, blood pouring from his nose, appears too weak to rise. Snorting with disgust, Chiyoh makes her way back towards her shotgun.

When the man manages to stand, he catches sight of Will. Face brightening, a stream of shrill words pour from his mouth. Will raises one eyebrow and glances at Chiyoh. The woman has spotted them but says nothing, continuing to methodically check her weapon.

"What's he saying?"

"He's attempting a deal...says he'll 'share the girl with us' if we help him."

"Hmmm...well in the immortal words of my son...'gross.'" Will gives the man a thumbs down and Hannibal chuckles.

Seeing no ally, the man staggers away into the thick underbrush. Chiyoh, lifts her rifle and takes aim.

POP

The three wait, concentrating on the sounds around them as the smoke clears.

"No," the woman observes to no one in particular. "I don't think I even winged him...too many trees...I'll continue north." She plunges back into the forest.

"Tough," Will comments.

"As nails," Hannibal agrees. "Shall we split-up? I'll go east."

William finds his father's room unlocked, but utterly devoid of useful technology.

"Shit!" *He must have hidden them, or locked them up!*

A rifle shot brings him running to the window. He wastes five precious minutes there before deciding it must have been a false alarm and walks into the little room Hannibal calls his closet. *They could be anywhere? Geez...how many clothes does this guy need? Wait...is this side dad's stuff? What the fuck dad!?*

The boy rifles through drawers of pocket squares, socks, underwear, ties and clips. He accidently blunders upon his parents' stash of sex toys, sifting, without comprehension, through the leather and metal items, until he comes across a massive, black, ribbed dildo.

Ewwwww! A rubber dick! That is so gross!

He slams the drawer closed and surveys the space. I don't have a lot of time. *Where the fuck is a phone?*

Boom

Will turns his head towards the sound. *Wonder whose gun that was*. The scream that follows brings his heart to his throat. *Who was that? Chiyoh?! William?!*

He stumbles around the woods for a few minutes, confused and disoriented until Hannibal's arm appears out of thin air and yanks him towards him.

"Christ! Did she get him? Who was that screaming?"

Rather than answer, Hannibal pulls Will through the brambles until they come across two figures sprawled under a massive elm tree; neither are moving.

Will drops to his knees beside Chiyoh. The woman's breathing is laborious, a constant stream of blood trickles from the side of her mouth down her ashen cheek; she's been shot in the chest. "Help...me," she pants.

"Hold on...Hannibal?"

Hannibal kneels down beside him; the woman flinches. "I'm sorry, my dear, there's nothing I can do."

Chiyoh coughs and begins to choke. Will rips off his own jacket to stem the hemorrhaging, but just as he applies pressure, the woman gives a little shudder and her eyes go blank.

Hannibal reaches down and pulls the coat off the dead woman. Bright arterial blood has already been absorbed into the mohair. "We'll need to soak this as soon as possible."

How did this happen? Will looks at the other body. "Is he dead too?" He stands and walks over to the prisoner. *Neck snapped...that would mean...*

"Yes, I did it. A better death than he deserved."

Will stares down at the shell of a man still clutching a revolver. "How did he get that handgun?"

"I gave it to him."

As though in slow motion, Will turns to face his lover. The shape of Hannibal's face is fuzzy around the edges, backlit and indistinct.

Fuck. "Why?"

Hannibal's face does that tiny twitch; the one which indicates both disbelief and annoyance in a situation. "Because she betrayed me Will."

Will's hands tighten on his own rifle. "How?"

"She was planning to murder you and the child and make it appear an accident."

What?! She played me? "Are you sure?"

"Come, come with me, Will," Hannibal points in the direction of the house, "we'll take care of the meat later. We need to check on the child."

The second time William hears a gun's report, a scream follows it. *Chiyoh?! Was that Chiyoh? Oh no!* He runs out of the master bedroom and down the gallery, looking for a window with a good view of the back. *If something happens to her...we're going to have to do*

it all ourselves! Seeing nothing but the barren back garden, he runs back to the room. *Maybe...maybe we can poison him!*

He returns to the ostentatious bathroom, climbs onto the marble counter and pulls open the mirrored cabinet doors. *Nothing but shampoo and stuff...think! Where would he...yes! The bedside table!*

The boy tumbles down and rushes over to the antique table beside the bed. He paws through packs of condoms, bottles of lube, another dildo, and a pair of handcuffs, before finally conceding defeat; there is nothing even resembling pills or the bottle of clear liquid Bedelia always had on hand. "Fuck!"

He slams the drawer and wills himself not to cry. *What are we going to do?!*

"William?!"

William's head snaps-up at the sound of his name.

"William?! Where are you?"

Hannibal...Hannibal is inside the house...and here he stands, deep in forbidden territory.

"There," Bedelia points to the screen. "That's the village they will be going next. Hannibal holds a long term lease on a villa."

Mason smacks his lips until Cordell holds a fluted glass with a straw to them. Bedelia helps herself to more wine; glad she's held firm in her refusal to play "nursie" to her perverse host. *Jailer, not host*, she corrects herself.

"Thank you Cordell. Alright, I'll look into that...so you think they're already there? Your boyfriend called me exactly five weeks ago; threatened to pay me a visit. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, sir. Though I believe it was Will Graham who spoke to me."

Since her unwilling installation into the Verger household, Bedelia's health has vastly improved but her preoccupation with escape has only intensified. Mason, she soon discovered, is a fascinating but disgusting amalgamation of unsavory pathologies; he is also an inveterate liar.

"Which boyfriend are you referring to?"

Mason whinnies. "That's the spirit doc...the cuddly cannibal of course, though I'm guessing his little bum-boy swings in that direction as well."

Crude but accurate. "Why did you tell me Graham and his son were here?"

Mason snorts. "Why do I say anything? Tell me," the googlie eyes capture hers," how is my sister looking these days?"

Bedelia rolls her eyes. "You know as well as I Mason, that I don't see Margot. Are you really that paranoid? Or is your security system on the fritz?" In her role of reluctant confidante, Bedelia has heard more than enough of Mason's breathless confessions pertaining to his sister.

"She and that doctor who took a swan dive out Hannibal's window have been seeing each other. She doesn't know I know, but big brother sees all...Cordell, more wine."

This is news. "Dr. Bloom?"

"That's the one! Are you a lesbo as well doctor?"

Bedelia doesn't dignify his query with a response, just smiles vaguely and continues to sip her drink. She's discovered if she waits patiently, Mason's strength taps-out after around half an hour. Unfortunately, his newest torture is to require she attend him during naps; though a bottle of wine is always provided for her refreshment.

Asshole has made me an alcoholic. "Have you any new information about that journalist?"

"The redhead? Nah...but I have been following another story...and this one is truly delicious. Tell me doctor, what is your professional opinion about the man they are calling "The Tooth Fairy?"

Francis breathes out, eyes closed, arms raised in a "V." The blood feels cold and tacky on his bare skin, but his body thrums with adrenaline and power. He opens his eyes and gazes up at his outstretched hands. The blood gleams blue-black in the moonlight and he feels his penis pulse back to life.

Better...this time was better.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry Chiyoh :-(

So how many people thought Chiyoh was going to help Will and how many thought she was planning on offing him and the kid?

House Rules

Chapter Notes

> So...school has taken me away from writing. This is just a little, teeny update. More of a stocking stuffer or amuse bouche than a chapter. My apologies...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal and Will meet William heading back down the corridor, the boy holds his breath to hide he's panting." Is that..."

Hannibal looks down at the blood saturated coat. "Yes. Sadly, Chiyoh is no longer with us." His eyes twinkle. "How have you been occupying yourself?"

"Just running around," William previcates, his stomach in knots at Hannibal's knowing smile. *Chiyoh's dead!!?*

"We just wanted to check you were okay," Will gives his son a quick hug, " but we have to go right back out again to finish a project." He pauses, William's eyes are glued to the smears of blood on his hands and sleeves.

"What project? What happened to Chiyoh? And that guy?! What happened?!"

"She was fatally shot and his neck was broken," Hannibal says brusquely as he brushes past the child to reach his bedroom. "Excuse me, William, this needs to soak and your father and I both need to wash up."

Watching his son, Will mimes that William should follow; he fears the boy might go looking for Chiyoh if left unattended. When they reach the master suite it appears deserted.

"Hannibal?"

A voice from deep within the walk in closet responds. "Just looking for my replacement garments, I'll be in shortly."

From the doorway, William's stomach clenches. *Oh shit...he knows.*

Will frowns at his son's nervous energy. *Fuck...I need to talk him through this...but I need to get all this off first.* He smiles encouragingly at William. "Wait here buddy...I'll be right back."

William watches his father walk the length of the large room and disappear into the washroom; he shifts nervously. *How did Chiyoh get killed? Did Hannibal find out she was planning to help us?*

"William? Could you come here please?" From inside the walk-in, Hannibal is quizzically eyeing the improperly closed drawers. *What were you seeking ožiukas? A firearm? A phone?*

"I'm not supposed to go into your room!" The boy calls from the hallway. *Hurry up dad!*

"I am well aware. Nonetheless, come here please."

William sidles through the entrance but goes no further. Hannibal, looking stern, appears from the closet. "You broke a house rule today."

William stares down at his feet, stalling for time. "What?! You told me I could come in!"

Hannibal folds his hands in front of him, torn between anger and amusement. "You know what I'm referring to." *I think...I think this urchin means to do me harm...interesting*.

Will appears, towel in hand. "Problem?"

Hannibal studies the small, bowed, curly head before him. "William entered our room without permission and searched through our things."

Will shakes his head. *This kid is reckless.* "William! That was a rude, disrespectful thing to do! You know better than that!"

Dad's worried too. "I'm sorry...I was bored."

Hannibal looks from son to father. *They are protecting each other...Will's loyalty has shifted.* The slick, oily feeling of betrayal slithers in his belly; he swallows it down. "I see...well we must do something about that, " he turns to Will," idle hands."

William looks up at his father in confusion, Will's expression scares him. *Something bad is about to happen*.

"No." The two men are waging a war without words.

Hannibal stiffens."He's already been a spectator...why not an active participant?"

"No."

William feels compelled to speak-up. "You guys are going to cut up the people now?"

Hannibal turns to the boy, good humor restored. *Such an diverting, entertaining child...he is more than ready*."That's right William...would you like to see how that is accomplished?"

Chapter End Notes

Happy Holidays to everyone!!!!

How's Tricks?

Chapter Summary

this opera is coming to an end...if anyone is still reading...enjoy!

I still got this dream that you just can't shake
I love you to the point you can no longer take
Well all right okay, so be that way
I hope and pray that there's something left to say

Blues Traveler

If it weren't for the fact his eyes were glued to the man's face, William would never have believed the flash of painful disbelief passing through those brown eyes when his peripheral vision catches a blur of motion.

Thump

William jumps back to avoid being smacked into as Hannibal slams, face- first onto the floor.

"Run." Will's voice is barely a wheeze; he drops a cast iron door stop where he stands.

William stares down at the prone man. *Oh my God!* "Dad? Dad! Is he dead?"

Blood is pooling beneath the prone man; Will can't tear his eyes away. As the dark puddle is slowly absorbed by the rug he feels a familiar numbing tingle, a signal that he is beginning to disassociate. *Hannibal...I'm sorry.* His knees buckle and he sinks to the floor.

"Dad!" William is kneeling beside him, dangling a pair of padded handcuffs. Some prosaic part of Will's brain recognizes them as the ones kept in the bedside dresser. "Dad?! Here! Before he wakes up!"

Robotically, fighting against the yawning darkness, Will obeys, gathering Hannibal's wrists together and cuffing them behind his back; William helping when his father's hands fail him. Task complete, Will sits back on his heels forgetting what he's meant to do next, nearly missing what his son is planning.

"STOP!"

William almost drops the heavy door stop he has managed to drag and lift above Hannibal's head. "SHIT! You almost made me drop it!! And WHY NOT?! We have to do it NOW!"

"No...William...no."

Will wonders if, at long last, William's anger and fear will propel him into murderous defiance. *I'm not sure if I could stop him if it does*. But at this most crucial moment, the boy, though still furious, turns and heaves the weight away from Hannibal's body.

"THERE! HAPPY?!"

Will mentally shakes himself. *Come on Graham...be a goddamn father...you started this*. He takes a shaky breath and rises to his feet. "It's okay William...let's just go."

The first action Hannibal does after freeing himself and applying necessary self-aid is to check then recheck the house and grounds. As he feared, all he discovers is Chyioh and his former prisoner, both already leaving rigor. A murder of crows is cawing excitedly from tree to tree; the cacophony pierces Hannibal's throbbing head.

So...they're really gone. Will has betrayed me...yet again.

Hannibal returns to the mansion, and gingerly lowers himself onto Will's armchair. He closes his eyes and turns his head into the fabric.

Will...

His eyes pop open and he raises his glass."To absent friends," he toasts, taking a small sip before placing his call.

"Yes?"

"It's time."

A quick intake of breath, then, timidly but with reverence, "Dr. Lecter?"

"Yes...Is everything prepared?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good...Are you ready?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Very good...5814 Santa Maria Court, Baltimore."

"5814... Santa...Maria...Court...Baltimore." The voice is both monotone and sibilant.

"Yes...well done...Kill them...Kill them all."

"Fuck!!" Jack only just stops himself from hurling his phone against the wall.

Outside his office every phone is ringing and the hum of voices rise as the news spreads. The Tooth Fairy has gone against his MO, slaughtering a family during a waxing moon, but Jack knows it's a message. *This isn't any fucking coincidence! Lecter's got to be involved! J*ack stands, jaw working as a detective hands him a new file with a fresh label: Merrill. He tosses it onto his desk. *If I ever lay eyes on you again, Hannibal fucking Lecter, you'll wish your mama had kept that nickel between her knees...so help me God...yes you will.*

"Hello William, it's so nice to finally meet you, I've heard so much about you."

"Hey," the boy replies, shy and embarrassed to be studied by this woman's clear eyes. *She feels bad for me.* The boy's face turns stormy and he walks away to examine the books on the bookshelf. *I'm tired of people feeling sorry for me.*

Alana Bloom turns her attention from the boy to his father and her gaze sharpens. "I'm frankly still shocked you had the nerve to contact us," she says quietly, taking Margot's hand and gently squeezing it, "what is it you want?"

Will shifts in his chair. He barely recognizes Alana as the woman he once loved. *Those days...it's as though they never happened*. He sighs and looks away. Alana's former sweet gentleness is gone, replaced by steely, unfriendly suspiciousness. *She's been forged in Hannibal's fire...same as the rest of us.* Rather than answer, he looks toward his son who is pretending to read titles of books. "William? Could you let us have the room? Just for a couple minutes."

Once William had been removed by the promise of a snack in the kitchen, Will addresses the waiting women. "I guess you could say...closure...and a healthy dose of revenge." He snorts at his attempt at humor then sighs. *Stay humble or they'll tell you to fuck off.* "Will you help me?"

Alana turns a wintry smile towards her lover and arches one brow. Margot nods, but looks uneasy. Alana gives her a quick peck on the cheek. When she finally looks back at Will, her tone is full of loathing. "We'll help. But not because doing so will help you, Will. We have our own reasons for this. But you?! " She sneers. " You can go to straight to hell."

"Huh," Will replies more bemused than affronted and nods in agreement. "Well...can't argue with you there. Let me go check on William and then, if I may, I would like to share with you my ideas."

"Hello little sis...hello Dr. Bloom, you remember Dr. Du Maurier of course?"

Bedelia sits upright at the unexpected entrance of Mason's sister and a woman she recognizes as Alana Bloom. She places her empty glass down and rises to greet them.

"Of course," she says wondering what Mason is up to." Your good reputation precedes you Dr. Bloom, hello Margot," she says shaking each woman's hand in turn. "Please, have a seat," she adds, gesturing to two empty chairs.

"They actually won't be staying for a chat."

All three women turn towards the voice; Bedelia gasps. "Will?!"

"Cordell!" Mason brays, pushing his security button.

"Cordell is currently indisposed," Will laughs. "And your security team can't come to the phone right now." Will is almost giddy with the success of his mission." He smiles beatifically at Hannibal's former therapist. *Maybe I'll actually let you live*. "Bedelia?!" He teases, "Is that really you?! How's tricks?"

William, ignoring multiple commands to stay in the car has wandered over to the stables in search of horses. He finds the correct building but all the stalls are empty. *That's weird! Where are all the horses? Did Mason do something to them? Wait...I think I can still smell them!*

The boy follows the scent to its source; an indoor corral filled with huge, squealing pigs. He holds his nose and backs away as two boars begin to fight for dominance.

"Gross!" William hurries on. *Hope their cage doesn't bust open!* A bit panicked by the idea, William follows a corridor and pushes through a set of swinging doors. The squeals and grunts recede into the background. He stops, looking around at what appears to be a laboratory. *What is this place?*

The room is dimly lit but machines glow and beep all around him. His attention is drawn toward an enormous pig strapped to a gurney and hooked-up to tubes and monitors. *Is this a pig hospital?* William watches the slow rise and fall of the pig's sides then notices its enlarged and swollen teats. *Oh! I bet it's a mama pig that's going to have babies!* William comes closer, intrigued. I *wonder how many babies are in there?*

An x-ray film clipped to a light board catches his eye. *Maybe that's a picture of them!*

"Wait..." he says aloud to the empty room, moving closer and squinting at the image ."That..."

"Is your half-brother." A voice behind him confirms.

End Notes

Tags/warnings will be added (once I've thought of a plot)

Please leave me a comment/feedback...they help so much :0)

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